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THE
EVANGELICAL PULPIT.

Twenty-eight Sermons

BY THE

MOST EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE PRESENT DAY

OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

**DELIVERED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF
THE METROPOLIS.**

"We are now certain that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto the salvation of every one that believeth. It has reconciled us to God and ourselves, to our situation and to our duty. It is the balm and cordial of the present life, and a sovereign antidote against the fear of death."—JOHN NEWTON.

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The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE EXISTENCE OF DEATH AND THE DESTRUCTION OF HIM
WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. J. STOUGHTON,

Of Kensington,

AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD,
DALSTON, SUNDAY EVENING, SEP. 21, 1851.

“FORASMUCH then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”—HEB. ii. 14, 15.

THE Scriptures contain notices of two systems or orders of things: the first is a state of things, which, if universally prevalent, would involve the complete ruin of the human race; it would extinguish the last spark of mercy, the last beam of hope, and consign the whole family of Adam over to remediless despair. It is a state of things which does prevail to a very considerable extent, and is being mournfully exemplified in the present and the everlasting ruin of multitudes of immortal souls. The other state of things which checks and controls this, is that which, if it universally prevailed, would render this world the very reflection of heaven; it would make men here as happy as angels are there. It is a state of things which does exist to a certain extent; and which is being realized most blessedly in the hearts and consciences of multitudes, whom God, by his grace, has reclaimed from the error of their way.

The one state of things is the cause of human bondage, and human degradation; the other is the cause of human freedom and human happiness. The devil—the great enemy of God, the destroyer of souls, the accuser of the brethren, he has the charge of one empire, and Christ, the Lord of life and glory, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Saviour of men; he has charge of the other empire. Both these agencies are at work—satan, on the one hand, is captivating and leading astray the souls of men, binding them with fetters of iron, and leading them on in a state of bondage to that prison where they will be shut up for ever; and Christ, on the other hand, is liberating the captive; he is breaking their chains, he is emancipating them from their thralldom, and introducing them into the glory and liberty of the sons of God. The two states of things exist in the midst of us. These two agencies are now at work—they are in conflict with each other, and we know which will, in the end, prevail. Both states of things are brought before us in this passage. The evil is recognized as existing; and the destruction of the evil is also declared. The evil is here recognized—the existence of death, that is here admitted; its connexion with satan, that is traced; and the misery and wretchedness of multitudes of our fellow men that also is described; and then, on the other hand, you have Christ introduced; dying himself, in order that he may “destroy him who had the power of death; and deliver those who, through fear of death,

were all their life-time subject to bondage." To the evil which is here recognized, and to the deliverance from it which is here declared, we desire this evening to call your devout attention, and may God the Holy Spirit be present to render our meditations effectual to the good of our souls.

As to the evil which is here recognized, you observe, it is—*death*. There is, what may be called, the *outer regions of death*. Death has established its dominion over nature—over the physical portion of the universe. All the material forms of existence with which we are acquainted—all those forms of existence that have become organised, are doomed to die and perish. This is true of the vegetable—true of the insect, and the animal creation; this is the *condition of their existence*. Their present forms of being must, ere long, disappear and pass away; but, this does not involve the *destruction or annihilation* of those elements of which these existences are composed. The *elements* of their being, remain; it is only the *form* that is destroyed. You may take any material thing you please—you may crush it—you may burn it—you may reduce it to a liquid, or you may reduce it to smoke and vapour, but still the constituent elements of organism remain; it is only the form that is destroyed. There is a change for *use*, and the change involves *loss*—the loss of that which gives cohesion, symmetry, gracefulness, and form; the loss of that principle which we name, but which we do not *know*—the principle of life. And this will illustrate what is going on in the *inner regions* of nature, where death also prevails. Man is made subject to death. Man is composed of body and of soul—of a material frame, which has enshrined an immaterial mind. The body dies—dies like the tree; dies like the insect; dies like the beast. It withers like the grass; it fades and droops like the flower; it falls like the tree. It is exposed to accident; it is exposed to disease; it is exposed to age and decay. The body of the man, like the body of the animal, is convulsed, and palpitates, and gasps; it falls and droops, and then sinks into insensibility and stillness; but, is not annihilated! "Man dieth and wasteth away: man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" The dust returns to the earth as it was! There is a change for use—a change, involving loss; that which was within—that which constituted the principle of life—that mysterious principle is gone.

The body remains in a state of contrescence and decay; it dissolves—it perishes! yet the elements of which it is composed, remain; but pass into other forms of existence. Death has laid its hand upon the soul as well as the body. The soul shall die! but the death of the soul doth not involve its annihilation. If the death of the body does not involve its annihilation, how can we conceive of the death of the soul involving its annihilation? There is not even *dissolution* here; because the soul is not an organized thing. The soul is not compounded, it is not divisible; the soul is of a spiritual nature—it is immaterial; it is one. When it dies, it only experiences a change—a change of which no adequate type can be found anywhere in nature. A change, which the perishing of trees or plants, or the perishing of animals does but most inadequately illustrate: it is a change, involving a tremendous loss—the loss of that which would have prepared the soul for the worship and the devotion of heaven. The loss of all that was god-like and good; the loss of holiness; the loss of love; so that the soul becomes, if we may so speak, so much *moral contrescence*; fit only to be swept away with the besom of divine destruction; swept away among the refuse of the universe.

The soul sins away its life, and brings upon itself the capital punishment of eternal death. The death of the body, my brethren, we shall all of us experience; that is inevitable. And if it had not been for that provision to which we shall hereafter refer, we should all of us know, by melancholy experience, what is involved in the death of the soul.

This, then, is the evil which is here represented, and there is a certain relation traced between it and Satan. The Devil is here spoken of as having the "power of death." This cannot refer to any legitimate authority. This cannot

not refer to any jurisdiction which has been conceded by the Great Ruler of the universe. This dominion, whatever it is, is a usurped dominion: it is a sovereignty, if it be a sovereignty at all, unjustifiably claimed and exercised. This power over death cannot mean the power of *inflicting death*—physical death—according to his pleasure; for the lives of men are not in the hands of Satan—they are in the hands of Him who giveth life; who “killeth and maketh alive.” The keys of death and the grave are not among the regalia of Satan. No! but they are appended to the burden of Jesus Christ. Nor can this power mean that Satan has the power of inflicting *eternal death*; for if we look at eternal death as it is identified with character, eternal death is but the shadow of sin itself; it is, in fact, but another name for it. The man sins; thereby dies; but it is not Satan that inflicts the death, it is man that inflicts it himself; looking at eternal death as consisting in a change of circumstances, as consisting in the consignment over to the world of darkness and woe; for that depends not on the exercise of power on the part of Satan, but the exercise of power on the part of God; and when the soul is lost, it is not represented in Scripture as falling into the hands of the devil, but as falling into the hands of the “Living God.” The devil, at the last day, will not send forth his angels to gather out of Christ’s kingdom the “things that have offended,” but Christ will send his own angels to do that. The everlasting fire is represented as prepared not *by* the devil and his angels, but *for* the devil and his angels. Satan is not the gaoler of hell, but Satan is himself a prisoner bound.

What then is meant by his having the “power over death?” He has the power of leading men to sin; or rather, he has the power of tempting men to sin. And so great is his power in this respect, and so active and energetic is he in putting forth his power, that we have tremendous representations of the subject made to us in Holy Scripture. We hear of him as the “Prince of the power of the air.” “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Those who sin are represented by the Apostle John as being *of the devil*: “He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” These representations shew that Satan has tremendous influence in leading men astray, in persuading them to do that which is displeasing in the sight of God, and inasmuch as Satan leads men into the commission of sin, and thereby entails death, he may be said to have “power over death.”

As to temporal death, that was introduced into the world when man fell. It would seem, my brethren, that death is one of the conditions of nature; and it would also seem that God before man fell made a special provision in order to preserve him from death. We do not apprehend that before the fall the *inferior* creation was preserved from death; but man was preserved from death—man was an exception from the rest of the universe. Human nature was, if we may so speak, a bright isle of life floating in the midst of the vast ocean of death. Human nature was a fair enclose where all was life and beauty, surrounded by regions where death could, and where death did prevail. If man had remained in a state of innocence and purity, man would have retained his immortality and death would not have touched him, but when he sinned, then there was an end to his exemption from death. Then, as it were, the rock that girt the isle of life was swallowed up, a flood of death came in, and man was overwhelmed. The fence was broken down, the destroyer passed from the outer regions of nature into the inner regions, and led man on to sin; and inasmuch as the devil tempted man to sin, and thus led to the breaking down of the edge which was his preservation, Satan may be represented himself as the author of the evil; having introduced the cause, he introduced also the effect. “Sin entered into the world and death by sin.” The devil brought sin into the world and brought death along with it—and in this sense he may be said to have the “power of it.” And as to *eternal death*—that is produced by sin. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” And inasmuch as Satan tempts men to sin, and thereby exposes them to eternal death, he may be represented as having power

THE EXISTENCE OF DEATH,

over that death. But mark, with regard to both these things, the power of *Satan is indirect*: it is not immediate; it is intermediate. He destroys the soul by *tempting the soul to sin*. He has destroyed the body by persuading men to become sinners. This power in neither respect is *direct*, it is *intermediate*. In this point of view both form and power are alike, but there is an important respect in which this form and power differ. As far as Satan's power over temporal death is concerned it is absolute power. There is no possibility of your escaping temporal death. To the king of terrors we must every one of us bow. While Satan's power in reference to temporal death is *absolute*, Satan's power in reference to eternal death is *conditional*. You and I will not die eternally unless we bring eternal death upon ourselves through our voluntary rejection of Christ and his gospel. It is not in the power of Satan to inflict eternal death upon you and upon me; it is not in his power to force us to do that which will incur eternal death: it all depends upon whether we will embrace the gospel or not; whether we will become subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ or not. We may "defy" the devil, we may "resist" him, so that he shall "flee from us." We may, through grace, attain to the enjoyment of the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." We may defy him who has usurped so much authority in this world; "we may bruise him under our feet." While Satan sustains that relation to death to which we have referred, we are also reminded by the text, that this death is the subject of fear to multitudes of our fellow men, and through such fear they are kept in bondage.

What are we to understand by this fear of death? It is not, I apprehend, the fear of *physical death*, for four reasons:—

1. The fear of physical death is *constitutional*. You observe the absence of it in many a bad man, and you observe the presence of it in many a good man. In its most aggravated form it amounts to nervous irritability, it amounts to physical disease; in its most mitigated form it is great, and comes of that principle of self-love which God has mercifully implanted in our nature.

2. The object of this fear is not destroyed in the case of Christ's saints. They have to die as well as others. All men die without any exception—the good as well as the bad, the sanctified as well as the depraved.

3. The removal of the fear of physical death could not, with propriety, be represented as the grand characteristic object which Christ came into the world to accomplish. To represent himself as coming to live and die just to remove the painful apprehension of death, which is so natural to us—to represent this as the grand object of Christ's coming into the world, would be amazingly to sink in our estimation the scriptural representation of that merciful design. And

4. In the case of many of God's saints the fear of death is not destroyed, it remains a source of great pain and sorrow. It is not, then, the fear of physical death to which the passage refers. It is the fear of *eternal death*—the fear of that "death which never dies;" that death which we have alluded to as the capital punishment of sin. And this, my brethren, may well be an object of fear; it is the most terrific thing that can be contemplated: the death of the body, that is nothing to it. Just to break the shell of humanity—just to strip off the rind—what is that compared with the smashing of the kernel?—to destroy the body, what is that compared with the destruction of the soul? Think of paralyzing the soul, think of killing that, think of wrapping it up as it were in a shroud of flame and burying it in the grave of everlasting perdition! Think of it! Oh! then, the most terrific thing in the universe is this eternal death, and man may well be kept in bondage through fear of it. If a man really had it in prospect before him—if he saw it continually as it were lowering upon him—if he saw this cloud of wrath ready to burst upon his path—if, amidst all the joys and all the pleasures of this life, he felt persuaded that he was at length to die for ever, and go down into the pit of eternal ruin—if he were to realize all the forms of suffering in this world as only typical of deeper

woes in the world to come—if in all his losses here he saw but a symbol of the great loss to be endured hereafter—if in all the pains of the body he felt that they were but presages of those pains that were hereafter to lay hold upon his soul—if he felt that death, which is here reigning in so many forms, was but the harbinger of a far worse death that was to come hereafter—Oh! if he felt this, his life would indeed through fear of death be kept in bondage. But observe, those of you who are not interested in Christ, who have not “fled for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel,” are really exposed to this death whether you have the fear of it or not; and if you have not the fear of it, this only shews your inconsistency; if you were not in a state of spiritual insanity you would fear the death which is before you. The first sign you can give of wisdom and reason, is to tremble at the thought of that death which is inevitable, if you do not secure an interest in Christ. And that conviction should lead you to repair to the cross of Christ, to seek the blood of the atonement, and that righteousness which will clothe your soul, and make you fit for heaven. The evil is recognised—the evil is death—Satan has power over it, and men are kept in bondage through fear of it.

Now let us look at the *deliverance*. We have seen the dark side of the passage, now let us look at the bright side of it. We are told that “Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Here is the method of deliverance; here is the assumption of human nature; here is the endurance of death. Christ took upon him our nature—became a man; lived in this world like one of us—and submitted to death. He had a body—he had a soul. His body died—died a cruel and painful death; his body was bruised and wounded; it was lacerated with thorns; it was pierced with needles. He died the death of the cross—the death of a malefactor! He was hung on the tree; and men and women went to see him hanging on that tree, as men and women now go to see a malefactor executed. Yes! they went to see him crucified! But never was there such a sight before or since. All the people seemed to have been struck with something most miraculous in this scene; for we are told that all the people that came together to “that sight,” beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. They had never seen such sorrow and tenderness before; they had never seen such anguish and such majesty combined; and they were stricken with amazement; they went away overwhelmed with astonishment. But besides the death of the body, there was the death of the soul—so far as his soul could die. We should correct our phraseology in speaking of the *death of his soul*, and speak of *death in his soul*, who “made his soul an offering for sin.” “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” As far as it was possible for his pure, and innocent, and holy soul to know what the agonies of death were, Christ knew them. Guilt was legally transferred to him by a mysterious process, and the consequences of guilt were endured by him as the result of that transference. “He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” This was the method, and here you have also a description of the results.

The results are described in two ways, “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.” The first representation, you observe, is—that he died in order “that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” Now this cannot mean that the devil is ever to be destroyed in the sense of being *annihilated*. Nor can it mean that at present the power of the devil is annihilated; that his agency is at end. Nor can this passage be regarded as representing merely what Jesus Christ did actually effect when he was upon the cross. It is plain that it also includes what he secured when he was upon the cross.

Now, my brethren, when we look at this destruction of the devil, what are we to understand by it? We see in another passage, that Christ has

"abolished death." Now, we apprehend that in the same sense in which it may be said that Christ has "abolished death," it may also be said, that Christ has *destroyed the devil*. Satan will be destroyed in the same sense in which all fallen souls will be destroyed—all fallen souls that have not an interest in the atonement of Christ.

But this destruction of satan seems to refer rather to his *power* than to his *person*—rather to his *agency* than to his *state and feeling*. There is an end to be put to his power—it is to be "abolished," it is to be "destroyed." The idea conveyed by this passage is tantamount to that conveyed by John when he says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." This is the first representation of the result.

Then there is a second; and I apprehend that the second is merely an extension of the first, for we have not here a statement of two distinct results, but of one result under two different aspects. The deliverance of those who, "Through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," is an extension of the destruction of him who had the "Power of death." His power is destroyed by the *emancipation of his captives*—that seems to be the idea.

They are delivered. How? We do not thoroughly understand yet all that is involved in this deliverance; but there are three things with regard to this deliverance which we are warranted to say: First, *They are delivered from eternal death*: they are delivered from the consequences of sin; they are delivered from the dominion and the supreme power of sin; they are justified before God; they are renewed by his Spirit; they can rejoice in his favour; they become "New creatures in Christ Jesus;" the elements of death are destroyed; they have a title to the inheritance of the saints in light; they delight to prepare for it.

The fear of death, perhaps, in this world does not pass away, but death itself passes away, and we shall find when we get into the Jordan that death hath no dominion over us; we shall find that the object of our fear was but a shadow; that what we so much trembled at was only like a dark form, as it were, reflected from the cloud; we pass through the cloud, and leave the dark form behind, and that which so much inspired our terror turns out to be a phantom and shadow. And oh, brethren, the indescribable blessedness of those who, after having been in this world the subjects of fear, find, when they get to heaven, that there was no reason for their fear! Holy souls there have been whom we have known, who all their lifetime were "Through fear of death subject to bondage." But, blessed be God, the hour in which they actually died was the hour in which they were emancipated from the "Fear of death," and their spirits took wing and ascended to the world where all is peace, and calmness, and joy. And thus Christ delivers his people—delivers them through death, from death eternal, the object of fear.

II. Jesus Christ so changes the character of death in the case of his people—so changes the character of temporal death—that instead of being a curse it becomes a blessing to the weary labourer in Christ's vineyard. The man that has borne the heat and the burden of the day—the man that has been working hard for years is taken to rest—falls asleep just like a weary toilsome labourer, and finds all peace, and all calmness, and all joy; and then at last he is awakened from this scene; his body is to be raised from the slumbers of the grave; his spirit is to come back, and to be united to his body, and humanity is to be perfected—it is to be "clothed," to be just like Christ's human nature—it is to be "transformed to the image of the Son."

III. Then once more. Christ delivers his people because he so preserves them during this life as that Satan does not gain the mastery over them. Satan may injure that which pertains to them, but Satan cannot destroy the soul itself, "That wicked one toucheth them not," so says the apostle John. We may illustrate this by referring to the case of Job: the devil had power over Job's possessions, he had power over Job's health, but he had no power over Job's life. God put that limit to his power—his life he was not to touch. And so it is with

regard to Christ's people: the devil may affect their spiritual possessions, and their spiritual health; the devil may rob them of their joys; the devil may produce disease, but the devil cannot kill the soul of one of Christ's children, "they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand."

Here is their security. And put these three things together—Christ delivers his people from the consequences of the power of Satan; death is changed in reference to them when they die, they only "fall asleep," at the last day they shall "wake up in glory;" and while they are in this world, they are surrounded by God's power, so that "that wicked one toucheth them not." I say, put these together, and then say whether or not the deliverance which Jesus Christ has accomplished be complete. But then we only see a little way into this mystery of grace; we do not understand yet fully what the deliverance means; we do not understand yet the height of glory to which Christ will raise his people; we do not know yet the full extent of the blessing of his redemption; we do not yet number the multitude of the saved. My brethren, when all the results of Christ's mediation shall be made visible; when there shall be the "manifestation of the sons of God;" when they shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, a multitude which no man can number; when it shall be seen—as we believe it will be seen—that the number of the saved far, far surpasses the number of the lost; when it is found that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," it will be demonstrated to the subjects of the universe, it will be seen in heaven, it will be felt in hell, that Christ hath destroyed the works of the devil; and after all his cunning, and his skill, and his toil, for years, and ages, and centuries, the empire which he has been building, shall all crumble away and come to nothing. Christ "destroys him who hath the power of death—that is, the devil; and delivers them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

And thus, brethren, we have attempted to illustrate the outline of this passage. But there are several thoughts which we cannot pass over; we can only gather them up, and draw our meditations to a close, by so doing. We cannot look at this passage without being struck, in the first place, with the *pre-existence of Christ*. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." This, then, clearly implies that he *existed in another state* before he came into this world; that he stooped down from an elevation, that he left a condition of glory, that he might come into a state of humiliation. Is not his assumption of our nature represented as *his own act*—his own voluntary act? He *took* upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; *clothed himself* with human nature; put it on as a man does his garment. But the man exists before the clothing, before the garment which he puts on; and so Christ existed before that human nature with which he clothed himself when he was in this world—"Before Abraham was I am."

Looking at this passage, we are further struck, in the second place, with the *atoning character of Christ's death*. If Christ by his death, deliver us from the fear of death, it must be because his death is an atoning death; for, looking at his death apart from its atoning character, it is calculated to increase, rather than to allay our terror. To think of him in the garden, overwhelmed with sorrow; to think of him on the cross, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that could never allay the fear of death; that must rather mightily increase it. Until we come to see that Christ's death was an atoning death, and by means of it the guilt of sin is done away, and our transgression expiated; when we see that, then we are delivered from the fear of death, and only in this way.

Looking at this passage again, we are, in the third place, struck with the *moral character of the government of God*. God might—we are speaking now of what was just physically possible—God might have destroyed the devil, might

have *literally destroyed him*, and might, by an act of power, have delivered his people from the fear of death; delivered them from all exposure to eternal ruin, and have raised them up from earth to heaven, and placed them at his own right hand. We can conceive of this as a physical possibility; but you find he adopts another method; he adopts what appears to us a circuitous process—he gives his Son to die, in order that we may be saved from death; and what does this teach us? Does it not teach us that God's power is under the control of something superior to itself? that God's power is under the control of wisdom, righteousness, and justice? that he will not do anything but that which is right? It teaches us that "it became Him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering."

Looking at the passage again, are we not reminded, in the fourth place, of *the infinite greatness of God's love*? To think that he should have saved us at such an expense, that "he should not have withheld his own Son, but should have freely given him up for us all!" should have resigned him over to the death of the cross, in order that you and I might be delivered from the death that dieth not! Oh! my brethren, no words can describe "the greatness of the love of God." And if his love was so great, it ought to melt our hearts, it ought to bring us on our knees to night, it ought to lay us prostrate at the foot of the cross, it ought to impress upon our minds that principle which Paul adopted as the motto of his life—"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again." And, finally, we are taught the *preciousness of faith*. How are men delivered from death, and from the fear of it? By faith in the Lamb that was slain: faith in the Intercessor that pleads: faith in the King of kings. It is faith that makes the difference between one man and another. Souls are now passing into the unseen world; some are ascending to the realms of bliss; and others are going down into the regions of despair—what makes the difference? Faith on the one hand, and unbelief on the other! Men in this world are travelling on to death, or advancing to the enjoyments of eternal life in heaven—what makes the difference? Faith on the one hand, unbelief on the other! "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent." Believe, and shew the reason of a man! Believe, and taste the riches of Christ's love! Believe, and look to triumph o'er the tomb! May God add his blessing. Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

"PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD."

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. CLEMENT DUKES, M. A.

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,
SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1851.

"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 Cor. vii. 1.

THE verse which I have read obviously belongs to the verses which precede it in the previous chapter. Our translators did well, no doubt, to divide the various books into chapters, though they were not originally written so; and then into verses for the convenience of reference; and, for the most part, they have succeeded admirably, though sometimes they have failed, and this is an instance of it. You will see, if you just read the two foregoing verses in connexion with this, how obviously this is true. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Now this is the duty pressed upon the attention of all believers from the considerations mentioned in the previous verses; and you observe that the apostle here evidently admits of some very precious possessions which belong to believers; and he directs their attention to these possessions as a motive to unbounded diligence in the pursuit of lofty purposes, and reminds them that they have something so precious—of such inestimable value, that there is enough to arouse them to the pursuit of such duties as those which are mentioned in the passage before us. You may be startled at the idea of the apostle speaking of wealth precious to God's people; seeing that in connexion with his own time the christian church, for the most part, was marked by great indigence; for in becoming christians in those days men were content to forsake all—and the all they had to forsake was often but very little—for it was the "common people that heard him gladly." It was "Not many wise, not many rich;" it was the poor of this world that received the gospel.

Now Paul feels this, and he refers to it in the chapter I have read. At the tenth verse he uses this remarkable expression—"As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." This is one of the

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singular paradoxes employed by the apostle, marked by profound wisdom, by perfect truth, by great eloquence, and by the highest possible order. This chapter is one of the most striking in point of composition, and in point of power, to be found in the whole range of the word of God. The wealth of which, the apostle speaks, was not in possession, but only in prospect; they had only the promises—but the promises of some people are far better than the payments of others, and it was so most strikingly in this case. The christian has valuable possessions, but they are spiritual, and on this account they are indestructible; they are deposited where "moth doth not eat," and where "rust cannot corrupt," and where "thieves do not break through and steal." The wealth of the christian is too refined to be grasped by vulgar hands, and so it will always escape the hands of violence, and even the shock of death itself. A man might as well attempt to chain a shadow or pierce a spirit as to rob the christian of his wealth. You cannot make any impression upon it, the object is too ethereal; too unearthly; the weapon meets no resistance at your hands; you may beat, but it is like beating the air; it is like grasping the wind: the christian's possessions, therefore, are real, though they are not palpable; they are genuine, though not felt; and the apostle avails himself of this when he says, "*Having*, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

Let me invite you to notice in the first place, *the christian's wealth*. There is great force in the first word employed 'Having' "Having" it. It implies, that he has it already, that it is in present possession; this is intended to convey the idea of *certainly* that all doubt is excluded, all contingency is out of the question. "Having" this promise. "Whatever God promises," secures to us the possession of it as certainly as if we had it already in our coffer.

In speaking of these blessings he says they are already in the christian's possession, and this is one of the *positive* advantages belonging to every believer: the blessings referred to they have because they receive them on the authority of God; and they have the pledge of his character and the pledge of his grace. If God hath said we shall have a mansion in the skies, we are just as certain of it as if we were already there in possession of it. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of all that the Lord hath said shall ever fail."

He speaks of every true Christian as sharing it in common with himself. You observe he constantly does this; he identifies himself with every true believer; never excludes himself as belonging to a higher class; but says, "having, therefore, these promises, beloved brethren." This spirit pervades the entire writings of the apostle; he never thought of any aristocracy in the church of God, but makes one common cause with all believers. There is one treasure, out of which every believer must be fed with grace sufficient for grace; and he meets the Christian church, and says to them, "Beloved brethren, having therefore these promises."

But then we may do well to enquire, on what *terms* the Christian is put into

possession of such blessings? How came they into the possession of them that believe? Do we hold them by right? Do we hold them by merit? Do we hold them by purchase, or by inheritance? The Scriptures tell us that we hold them by *grace*, and by *grace alone*. We are "saved by grace, through faith, and even that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Whatever, therefore, we possess, we possess by deed of gift; we hold it as the result of the merits of another, and not our own; "by faith and not by works." If, therefore, we have this promise, it is in consequence of the goodness, and forbearance, and mercy, of the great and good God of heaven.

And then he sets forth this blessing in the form of a promise; a form of speech that is very frequently referred to in the Word of God. For instance, in Heb. xi. 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Now, what are the specific promises to which the apostle here refers? In the seventeenth verse of the foregoing chapter, he says, "Therefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; touch not the unclean." What then? "And I will receive you." Give up the wicked, and "I will receive you." And what else? "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having, therefore, this promise," the promise of acceptance, the promise of adoption, that God is to be our Father, that he will be reconciled unto us, and that we shall be brought into the same relationship and intercourse into which the prodigal was introduced when he returned to his father's house. The christian, therefore, has a promise as soon as he believes; he becomes a member of the royal family, and a son, and he may claim kindred with the skies; belongs at once to the blood royal, and being adopted into that family, is made an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus.

The apostle seems to revel in this when he says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This confers upon every believer dignity, life, and immortality; and it seems to have been a favourite topic upon which the apostle delights to dwell. In one place you remember he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He would glory in the cross. So in the closing part of the third chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians, "Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And in another place he says, pointing at the mighty efforts made by those who were the competitors in the great and remarkable games of Greece and Rome, "These do it for a corruptible crown." One of the most favourite crowns for which they competed was simply a wreath of parsley, that would only last a few hours. The apostle points to this and says, "These do it for a corruptible crown, we an incorruptible." So the apostle Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to

"PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD."

his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God." If God be our Father, we have a share in his kingdom—the kingdom of nature, the kingdom of providence, the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of heaven on earth, and the kingdom of heaven in glory. All the resources of those different departments of God's government are open; for the apostle says, in consequence of our adoption into his family, and becoming sons of God, "all things are ours." Oh, what a glorious fact is this! Can the world, can pleasures, can wealth, be any equivalent to this? Did the Saviour speak wisdom when he said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Dr. Watts has caught this thought most beautifully, when he says,

" I'll read the histories of thy love,
And keep thy laws in sight;
While through thy promises I rove,
With ever fresh delight.

" 'Tis a broad land of wealth unknown,
Where springs of life arise,
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
And hidden glory lies."

Such, then, brethren is the possession of the Christian; he has these promises, and they are the pledges of a full reward.

In the second place, let me direct your attention to the application made by the apostle of this fact,—“Let us therefore.” The possession of any gift whatever, involves a serious corresponding responsibility as to the use we make of it. These promises are given with a certain distinct and definite understanding. We must not wrap our treasure in a napkin, or bury it; we shall have to give an account of it. We may not place our lighted candle under a bushel; we are bound to shew it for the light of others. And whatever God confers, whether it be one talent or ten, we shall have to give an account to God at last. No man has any right to do as he will with his own. It is a heathen, profane, unscriptural and irrational idea that man, who is dependant upon God for every thing,—dependant upon God every moment,—should make their mind the law of their life, instead of making the law of God the rule of their conduct. Whatever therefore God has bestowed upon us, whether in reference to this life or the life to come, we are bound to use it as he requires. Religion is not a system of mere privilege, it is not a system of mere luxury of life in which we may revel, nor is it a mere system of abstract notions. Our religion is in one sense a *religion of faith*; in another sense it is a *religion of works*; and the man whose religion consists simply in the scientific arrangement of truths contained in the Word of God and in the surrendering of his understanding to the truth of these things, but whose heart and life are unaffected by them, is not a religious man; that may be the religion of a devil, but it cannot be the religion of a child of God! The religion of the Bible is equally a system of activity and of obedience. Faith after all is obedience; it begins in obedience, and it ends in obedience. It is a great privilege for us to know that “they who believe shall persevere to the end.” I say this is a privilege, but it is no less an absolute duty for every true believer to be found “striving and persevering even to the end.” There is enjoyment in the way, that leads to God as well as in the possession and the presence of God. A true believer finds as much delight in obedience as he will ever find in heaven. A true believer would not think it at all a privilege to serve the world, and not live in accordance with the commandments of God; so that his religion is altogether rather of a practical than a theoretical and abstract character. “We are saved by grace,” it may be said; most truly and entirely we are, but grace works

from motives, it does not implant new faculties, but simply developes and stimulates the old ones; Paul says, therefore "Let us cleanse ourselves." Striking language! He says to all believers, "Come let us address ourselves to this object, we are polluted by nature, polluted by practice; let us now seek to cleanse ourselves;" elsewhere it is said, "Make to yourselves a new heart;" A mighty work to which a man should be called! Again, it is written, "Work out your own salvation." Again, "Make your calling and election sure." Again, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Now in all these passages, we have the one thought, that part of our religion is to strive with God; to seek to cleanse ourselves just as the poor invalid at the pool of Bethesda was always waiting and watching, and had been waiting and watching many years; and the moment he saw the waters troubled, he was ready to plunge in, but some one more active and alert, plunged in before him. And so every one must be using every effort in order to secure the accomplishment of his object.

Some imagine that religion is of this character,—it can only be one of two things,—either requiring that man should do *nothing* towards his salvation, or else do *every thing* towards his salvation. Some put us to this alternative, and say, you must deny the one or the other. We reject them both! The one is presumption, and the other sloth, and both sin. The man that would do nothing for salvation, never deserves it; and the man that would seek to accomplish it without God, and Christ and the Holy Spirit, shews that he knows nothing of himself, nothing of God, and nothing of the gospel. I say we reject both; neither conceding to the terms of one man who says, "I can climb to heaven by my own strength," nor to the man that will have nothing to do with himself; who imagines he may lie asleep all the days of his life, and yet, peradventure, awake up in heaven. We choose the middle course—that which God himself has marked out; and while we eschew sloth on the one hand, we would ever be found relying upon God on the other. Diligence and dependance are in no sense incompatible; but form a beautiful combination. I say, diligence and dependance at the same time. This is very beautifully expressed in the passage, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Depend upon it, to make a determined manly, courageous effort against sin, and increasing anxiety to subdue evil, eradicate evil, mortify the flesh, crucify the body, put away every irregular desire, every unholy passion; never to harbour but always expel sin, is a reasonable as it is a religious duty. The extent of this duty is distinctly marked out in this passage. "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness." What sort? "All filthiness of the flesh, and all filthiness of the spirit." Most men will admit that it is a desirable thing that every member of society should seek to be free from all filthiness of the flesh; about that there can be no diversity of opinion. But the filthiness of the spirit, that is, after all, a Christian question. There are not only unclean *acts*, but all unrighteous *principles* are uncleanness. Some imagine that only outward profligacy can pollute, but there are sins that are harboured in the soul that are infinitely more polluting in their character than all the outward indulgence of the flesh. Ungodly thoughts, ungodly desires, ungodly passions; the indulgence of envy and revenge; the crime of selfishness; these things are not so palpable, but in my judgment, they are far more sinful, and far more polluting in their character than drunkenness or even sensuality! Moreover, a polluted spirit can never be long separated from a polluted life. A man may contrive by mighty efforts to conceal the state of his mind from the view of the world, but sooner or later that state of mind will manifest itself. Men are restrained by education, and by a selfish regard to their prosperity in the world, and these considerations preserve them from gross immorality. This is especially true in reference to the refined, and

educated, and polite. There is a kind of conventional morality, conventional propriety which arises not out of a renewed heart's regard to God, but simply out of the fashions of the day. It was the fashion in the time of Charles the second, to be thoroughly polluted and depraved, and he was the bravest man, who was the most thoroughly saturated with profligacy and drunkenness. The consequence was, it became the universal feeling among the people. But now, in our own times it is of a very different character. A man that shall yield himself up to his passions would be put out of society, he would not be welcomed in any respectable or decent family, so that even those addicted to profligacy, are obliged to cover their deeds with darkness. A man may sometimes obtain a respectable reputation while he is harbouring a very bad state of mind and heart, but, before God, that man is as corrupt as the outwardly gross and open profligate; he may be decent outwardly, but he is only to be compared with a whited sepulchre of polished marble, very beautiful in its material, costly in its ornaments and its structure, but within, it is full of corruption and dead men's bones. He is polished, but he is a polished hypocrite! the heart is corrupt, depraved, abandoned; the heart therefore, is included in the passage before us. Now the only way really to cleanse the flesh from this filthiness, is first to cleanse the spirit. A new heart is the only remedy for all the pollutions of society. How much better is this than the performance of hard ceremonies, or the infliction of any lacerations whatever, that may be appointed to the body for the sin of the soul! How much better it is to teach the people to go to the Holy Spirit and ask for a new heart, than to teach the child to go to the priest, to go to the font, to go to the confessional, to go on pilgrimage, or to go to penance! Only let the people believe in Christ, have his blood sprinkled on their consciences, and ask his pardon, only let them seek for the renewing of the Holy Ghost, then all these things are unnecessary. The apostle, therefore, teaches us not to preach the doctrine of penance, or confession, or any of the ceremonies or rights connected with public or family worship; but he teaches us to impose it upon every man's conscience, to seek to "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of the Lord."

This prepares us then to notice in the last place, the Christian's aim, "Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." And perfection in this department is our duty, at least it must be our aim; and we must never be content with any thing short of this, we find the greater advances the Christian makes in the divine life, the less satisfied he is with himself, and the more fervently does he pray to be made like his Lord. Men are apt to substitute another enquiry instead of that placed before us in the text. The apostle says we are to "cleanse ourselves; perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Some persons set aside this duty, this injunction; they never allow it to engage their minds, but rather delight to ask such questions as these, "Am I chosen of God?" "Think ye that I am predestinated for salvation? If so, I am safe; if not, all effort is unavailing." And so in this way they find an excuse for indolence, rid themselves of all anxiety for their salvation, and go down to death with a lie in their right hand. Now, instead of this, the apostle teaches us ever to be seeking on the one hand to be rid of all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" and on the other hand, to seek to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." You must remember that men are not only predestinated to be saved, but they are also predestinated to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." Great mistakes are made in reference to this matter. They imagine the doctrine of predestination has to do with the end only, and not the means also; whereas we find in Scripture the doctrine has not to do so much with the *end* as the *means*; and with the means in *order* to the end. If you turn, for instance, to that extraordinary passage in Romans viii. 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," to what? "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born

among many brethren." And then in the tenth chapter of the same epistle, and fourteenth verse, "How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Now here you see the whole process through which the soul must pass from darkness to light, from death to life, from sin to holiness. The apostle speaks of it very differently from those who pervert and abuse his language and doctrine. Read the thirteenth verse for the sake of connexion, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;" that is a settled principle. This is the process through which the man must pass, in order to secure the end. He intimates that if the means are wanting, the end shall not be secured, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed—and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard—and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" God is not a hard Master; there is nothing absurd in his government; every thing in his government is as equitable in grace, as it is in nature and in providence. But there is a special process through which the human heart must pass, in order that he may "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." The best evidence a man can have in answer to the question "Am I chosen—am I predestinated?" the best evidence in confirmation of this, is a *holy life*. If an angel should come and tell me that I am saved, I would not believe him if I did not perceive that I was holy. An angel can never contradict the word of God; and in the word of God it is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Holiness, then, is as much our duty as faith; and it is as much our duty to seek to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, as it is for us to discharge any duty pressed upon us in the word of God. We must aim, therefore, to be "perfecting holiness." Be satisfied with nothing short of this. If you desire to be with God, you must try to be like God; or else, where God is, you can never come. For "Except a man be born again, not of water, but of the Spirit of God—except a man be born from above, born of God, born from heaven—he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Holiness is the transmission of God himself into his own children; and the more perfect our standard is, the more resolute will every effort be; and the man who is aiming at perfect holiness, is the man most likely to strive for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But then there is a rule by which these efforts are to be regulated, "in the fear of the Lord;" "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Doing it in the spirit of holy fear, reverence, and dependance; not from any self-confidence or vain boasting, but dependant on God, looking to God for all the help in grace we need; "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." And the means by which this christian work is to be promoted, are by prayer and self-discipline, by a diligent attendance on the means of grace, public, private, and social; by a manly resolution never to tamper with sin; never to trifle with duty; and all who resolutely set their hearts upon holiness, as well as upon heaven, and are seeking to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," will certainly not labour in vain.

You may learn from this passage, brethren, in the first place, that religion is vindicated from the charge of impurity. We suffer grievously; and O! we suffer most unrighteously from the world on account of the gross inconsistency of some who belong to our fellowship, and who worship where we worship. Our answer to them, on account of the inconsistency, and vulgarity, and coarseness of those about us, is this—that the apostle has written, "Having this promise, beloved brethren, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." This is our reply, there must be no inconsistency, impurity, and unbecoming spirit and character manifested by those who worship where we worship. We are not answerable for them; "to his own master must every man stand or fall." There is no such word as *indulgence* in the Word of God. If a thing be wrong, God never sanctions it—never grants indulgences; if a thing be right, we must do it. Religion is clear

from all these charges. Religion never sanctions toleration. There ought to be no such thing upon the earth as toleration! It is an insult to God! If a thing be right, who shall dare to presume to tolerate it? If a thing be wrong, who shall dare to sanction or permit it? Religion is point blank against all "filthiness of the flesh or spirit!" Everything inconsistent in man's life must be traced out and attributed to himself, to the corruptions of his own evil heart. It belongs not to his religion; it is not sanctioned in the Word of God. We therefore throw back the taunt that is oftentimes urged against us. We say it belongs not to us; cast your stones at them who offend you, and not at the Word and Spirit of God.

In the second place, every person should aim to cultivate holiness; not merely to say, "I believe." That may be very well and very good in its place; but *holiness* is the thing. No Christian may be satisfied merely with justification. Justification is only the beginning of the work; justification is but the beginning of sanctification, and of God's sovereign mercy, and the great principles of his government. But what the Christian desires more than justification is sanctification, that he might be made meet to be made a partaker with the saints in light. The great aim and object, therefore, of every true believer, is to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

And then, brethren, how strongly does this remind us of the attractiveness of heaven to every true believer. Here we have a mighty conflict; here we are constantly fighting against the "filthiness of the flesh and the Spirit;" here we find it taxes all our faculties to the highest possible pitch, keeps the heart and mind on the stretch to resist what is evil; but in heaven all will be still, and without a struggle and without a fear. The mind and the heart will be in true harmony with the will of God. It would require an effort to do wrong, and no effort to do right. The current of our thoughts and the current of our feelings will be towards the throne of God; and looking at him, we shall be like him. O! what encouragement then is there for the Christian to be valiant for the truth. Rest assured that if you labour now—strive now—soon you shall be crowned; for the Spirit says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Amen.

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# The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE PIETY AND DEPARTURE OF ENOCH.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. W. S. EDWARDS,

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, CITY ROAD, SUNDAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 19, 1851.

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"And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."—GEN. v. 24.

THE days had come when men began to multiply upon the earth; population had vastly increased; family after family had risen; and the range of intercourse had widely extended. The sad narrative of Abel's unnatural decease, is followed by a tabular statement of successive generations, and another bright spirit illumines the historic page. The second hero of the Bible is Enoch; and the record which inspiration has furnished of his character and course is singularly terse and significant. We have no pompous parade of his virtues; no glowing catalogue of renowned and illustrious achievements; but in few and emphatic words his whole history is briefly summed up. Now, I attach importance to this fact. The life of a man is much sooner told than people commonly imagine. There is no necessity for sounding it forth with a flourish of trumpets; character will live when written words have perished. The hand of inspiration might have doubtless recorded much more. We might have been furnished with a graphic delineation of his course; with a beautiful sketch of his progressive attainments in holiness; with a sublime narration of his intercourse with God; with a splendid description of his triumphant departure from this low diurnal sphere—but no! Enoch's record was on high! written, noted down, minutely described on the annals of eternity. He was canonized not on earth, but in heaven; and sublimely, singularly devoted as his career unquestionably was, yet passing by the whole, all that inspiration has recorded is simply this—"Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him."

But the record of Enoch is not to be undervalued, because of its brevity; bulk is not the truest estimate of worth. Moral excellence needs no cumbersome heap of words to recommend it. The statement may be short, while yet the meaning may be vastly comprehensive; and such is most certainly the fact with regard to what is said of Enoch; for, like a proverb, or an apothegm, it derives additional significance from the very fewness of words in which it is embodied. It should also be remarked, that the very *position* in which the record is found, imparts yet a brighter lustre to the character it so graphically

sketches. Name after name is recorded and hastily dismissed. It is reasonable to suppose that many of *these* were devoted and pious individuals ; but still their devotion and piety are not noted for the information of successive generations. In relation to these there is absolute silence. The hand of inspiration rapidly sweeps through the catalogue until it stumbles upon Enoch, and there it pauses. *He* was a character too illustrious ; a man of piety too sublime and elevated to be only casually named : there was a sacred radiance investing his course too bright to be quenched in the sepulchral darkness which enshrouded the race of his cotemporaries. His was a moral lustre and an ultimate reward more splendid than the whole, and as if to mark the fact, to give it pre-eminence, and weight, and influence, on generations yet to come, *he* is not merely named, but most significantly described, and most illustriously commemorated. Some of the others probably served God, honoured God, lived to God ; but, as for Enoch, *he* "*walked with God*;" he was the noblest, loftiest spirit of the age, and the pen of inspiration not only stops to record it ; but—even to *repeat* it. First, it states, "And Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah three hundred years." And then, as if delighting to linger on the fact, and desiring to invest it with a moral grandeur greater still, and worthy of all subsequent ambition, again the fact is stated, and in one bold stroke, his history, and his portrait, and departure are sketched with the pencil of heaven in the short but truly graphic sentence—in the brief, but beautifully express language, "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." What a marvellous announcement ! What a singular end !

There are two facts which require our investigation—*The character of Enoch's piety, and the peculiarity of Enoch's end* ; "*Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*"

In the first place then, we have to investigate the character of Enoch's piety—"Enoch walked with God." This language is expressive of a state of spiritual enjoyment which Enoch did not always possess ; a degree of practical moral excellence which Enoch had not at one time attained. It is said, as I have already informed you, that "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years." Now, prior to this period, Enoch had lived sixty and five years ; and though it is doubtless probable that he had made no inconsiderable attainments in personal and practical religion before this, still the record of this fact would seem to convey the intimation that it was not until he had reached this period of his life, that a course, so *remarkably* distinguished, and so *singularly* devoted, received its commencement. This was not a degree of spiritual elevation which Enoch had reached all at once. No ! doubtless he had many a struggle, and many a defeat, ere he acquired it. But year after year he struggled with all its difficulties ; battled with all its oppositions ; grappled with all its obstacles ; until, at last, he mastered them all, and stood erect in the conscious dignity of the victory, by faith, which overcometh the world. After a constant, incessant, progressive conflict, with the world, the flesh, and the devil, he stood an honoured victor. Or if his foes were not absolutely vanquished, yet still they were doubtless subdued, and in calm and undisturbed serenity and peace, he "*walked with God.*"

The spiritual life is progressive. In nature we have first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. In science, we have rays at first, dimmer than starlight, isolated facts, uncertain theories, partial experiments, brilliant discoveries, great practical inventions. And so it is, too, in the operations of grace; we go from strength to strength. There must be the blasts of winter, and the storms of spring, and the sunshine of summer, ere we stand all ripe and ready for the gathering of the harvest of a better world.

Walking with God is by no means easily attained; there is often a protracted, a trying process, ere it is acquired. "You do not attain it as soon as you are regenerated; you may have very much to do, and perhaps very much to suffer, before you can come to it. There are gradations in grace as well as in glory. Peter quailing before the servant maid in the hall of the high priest, and Peter confronting boldly the Jews at the feast of Pentecost, were vastly different men. Nicodemus timidly stealing to Jesus by night, and Nicodemus openly attending the funeral of his crucified Lord, were by no means the same. What was once only weak, had now become strong; and what was once only feeble, had now become mighty. Dream, not; therefore, that you have already attained; you are not to be idle, but to be vigilant; neither past experience nor present attainments can suffice. Onward! onward! is our watchword; progression is the law of the spiritual life. We grow from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers in Christ Jesus. While Enoch's piety was *distinguished*, it was also *gradations and progressive*. It was by a succession of conflicts and victories, that at last he reached it. *At the end of sixty and five years*, "Enoch walked with God."

There is also another fact which deserves to be borne in particular remembrance. Enoch was a father—the head of a family; there was resting upon him the responsibilities and cares of a numerous household. He had sons and daughters, and all the attendant anxieties associated with parental obligation. Now, of course, he would have to provide for his household—he would have to toil for their sustenance in infancy—to impart instruction proper and needful in youth, and communicate knowledge adapted to practical benefit in manhood. And at a period so remote, the difficulties attending this would be proportionably great. The discharge of parental obligation could not be easily transferred to others; its delegation to competent persons would be almost impossible. You can easily judge, therefore, how numerous and how peculiar would be the difficulties with which Enoch would have to contend, in his position as the parent of a numerous family. But did he seek to evade or avoid them? Did he arrive at the conclusion that the culture of high-toned piety was incompatible with the cares and responsibilities of a family, and therefore abandon the one for the sake of the other? No, my brethren; he served God, not by a cowardly retreat, but by active toil; not by monastic seclusion, but by manly conflict; not by running out of the world, but by abiding in it, and battling with it. On the walls of a monastery I read some time ago this inscription, "Here men come to learn how to live." What! learn how to live! How can men learn how to live, themselves shut out from life?

How can men fight the fight of faith when they have none to fight with? Who is the hero? He who turns and runs away, or he who throws away the scabbard, and boldly grapples with the foe? Alas! for the sanctity of monks and nuns. Are they better than Enoch? Was his piety nurtured in absolute solitude? Ah, no, my brethren; he abode with God in the station which providence had assigned to him; he walked with his Maker in the active fulfilment of his domestic and social obligations. It was not in retirement. It was in sanctified intercourse and fellowship that he attained that distinction—that devout pre-eminence which inspiration has recorded. He did not seek a ladder to climb to heaven by himself, but he walked abroad on the earth, and tried to get a multitude to climb there with him.

There is also another fact which is here suggested—a fact brethren, which relates to the other, and perhaps no less, injurious extreme. Though Enoch was *in the world*, and not shut out of it, yet, doubtless, he had learned by faith *to live far up above it*. His cares neither excluded his devotion, nor extinguished his piety; amidst his numerous and his pressing anxieties he kept up an intercourse with heaven, maintained a course of integrity and uprightness, and continually advanced in the inward enjoyments and the outward development of practical religion.

Amidst the whole he doubtless found both time and opportunity for prayer and for devotion, and for repeated and protracted labours both of faith and of love. This is the lesson which, in this bustling age, the church will have to learn. We are not so much afraid of your becoming hermits, as we are of your becoming worldlings. We are not satisfied with daily bread, with a reasonable share of food and raiment—we must have luxuries, elegant furniture, expensive and showy parties, houses and lands; and these absorb both time and wealth; both the one and the other are valued for secular, rather than spiritual benefit; the consequence is, that the exchange is preferred to the closet, the shop to the sanctuary, the state of funds to the state of the heart. We forget the proverb—"He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." With many professors the lust after wealth is the one besetting sin; they think of little else all the week long; God is scarcely ever in their thoughts! their seats are always vacant at the hour of prayer, for they will never close the shop while a penny can be taken. Ah! in a huge metropolis like this, it is not an easy thing to "walk with God,"—not an easy thing to preserve the flame of genuine religion. Here is our danger; the love of money shuts out the love of Christ; and mammon usurps the throne of God. Oh, this avarice! it is the one gigantic vice of the times in which we live; it has turned this vast metropolis into a bulky machine, in shape and semblance like a treadmill; it has covered it with a race toiling from early morn to dewy eve for nothing else than worldly gain, and the evil has wrought its way through every rank and class, exhausting all the energies, and leaving little but spiritless languor for higher and better things. Oh, my brethren, while in the world, like Enoch, try to live above it. Grace is a plant which will only thrive when fanned by the breath of devotion, and watered by the out-pouring of the Spirit from on high in answer to the prayers and supplications of the closet and the house of God.

We pass on to the consideration of one or two other facts which seem naturally to arrange themselves under this department of our subject. How did Enoch attain to this remarkable distinction? By what process did the man secure to himself this intimacy with God, and all those distinguished, those singular privileges and advantages associated with it? Now from the hour of the fall down to the present moment, the method of acceptance with God has been always the same. Like Abel, therefore, he doubtless came to God with sacrificial blood as the typical representative of the grand atonement to be offered in the fulness of time. I imagine that Enoch had clearer views and more exalted conceptions of all this, and of what all this involves than any of his cotemporaries. His mind was

in high-toned sympathy with every portion of the plan, and thus in harmony of thought and feeling with the method of grace which divine wisdom had revealed, he continually came unto the Father, and lived in the possession and enjoyment of his favour. "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him;" but before his translation, he had this testimony, that he "pleased God." Another subject of reflection relates to this remarkable distinction itself. In what did his walking with God consist? and what are the facts which this singular phraseology would seem naturally to suggest? Now, doubtless, there is much in this statement, at least so I think, which no human language can exactly express, and which no human thought can exactly conceive. But some of the facts which the term is intended to convey, may undoubtedly be clearly understood.

There was *friendship*. Enoch was God's friend, and God was Enoch's friend. "Two cannot walk together except they be agreed;" and between God and Enoch a perfect agreement existed, and that agreement was founded, mind you, on the submission of Enoch to the mind of God. Enoch was a man of like passions with ourselves, born with the same depraved nature, and subject to the same depraved propensities; but Enoch had come to God as a sinner—had humbled himself in the way which God had appointed, and in virtue of the atonement thus offered—offered as a typical representation of the atonement to come—Enoch was accepted.

Now this was the basis on which the friendship was established. It was not a friendship founded on equality; it was not like the friendship which exists between a man and his neighbour, but rather like the friendship which exists between a father and his child. On the penitential expression of his grief, and the practical exercise of his faith, Enoch was no longer regarded as a stranger, but received and welcomed as a son, as the heir of grace and of everlasting life; he became the object of God's intimacy, was admitted to the possession of God's favour and God's affection; God took him into his fellowship—then there was *intercourse*. Persons do not generally walk together in silence, there is an interchange of thought—there is a familiar expression of feeling—there is an intimate fellowship—a sympathy of mind with mind. Now there was something similar to this in the case of Enoch. Yes! he kept up an intercourse—a communion with God. "By prayer and supplication he made known his requests, and the ear of God was always open to receive them. God heard and God answered. Wherever he went, he carried with him the consciousness of God's presence. "He walked with God." He saw him in the cloud-capped mountain, and in the wide-spread plain; he saw him in the sun that gilds the day, and in the stars that light the night; he saw him in the grass that clothed the field, and in the woods that skirted the hills. By a holy thoughtfulness he extracted heaven from earth; by a holy mechanism he constructed a ladder, ascending step by step like the angel in the mystic dream of Jacob, until he stood face to face before the Creator, as a man talketh with his friend. Every spot was a Bethel, every place a house of God, every corner the gate of heaven, every step a walk with God, every district hallowed ground, every breeze emitted a whisper, every flower and every atom a reflection of his nearness. God was in all his thoughts, God was always with him; he had beset him behind and before: he was about his bed, and about his path; and Enoch rejoiced in that thought; it was not a terror, but it was a delight; as he was with God, so God was with him. There was an intimate intercourse, a fellowship between them; an outgoing from the one, and a forthcoming from the other. "Enoch walked with God."

But further. There was a *progressive assimilation to the mind of God*. Between two minds brought into close association, into frequent and intimate contact, there is a process of action and reaction continually going on; by an influence of which probably, both parties are unconscious at the time, they

mould, and fashion, and conform to each other. And here, also, be it observed, that in all such cases, the strongest mind will be most influential; the greater mind of the one will possess and exercise a corresponding power on the mind of the other. Now Enoch "walked with God," and in the intercourse which thus subsisted, the mind of God was acting and reacting on the mind of Enoch, until at last it produced the clear, sublime, and beautiful impression of God's image. By a perpetual intercourse and communion with God, Enoch's nature became etherealized. Yes! the advancement of his life, and the progress of his sanctification, kept pace with each other. Every day brought victory over sin; every day triumph over satan; every day conquests over flesh and self. And in all this devotion, Enoch's piety was not merely *passive*, but *active*. Like Him who was to come in the fulness of time, and on whom his faith was resting, he went about doing good; he was a prophet, a preacher of righteousness; he proclaimed the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints; he lived a life of active toil, of sublime devotion, and of spiritual elevation. The world had lost its charms; he was more fitted for eternity than for time—more fitted for the intercourse of angels, than the communion of men—more fitted for the glory of heaven, than for the engagements and duties of earth. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Secondly, we have to consider *the peculiarity of Enoch's end*. Enoch was exempted from the common lot of humanity. In virtue of that prerogative, which is of course essential to the sovereignty of the Godhead, the uniform infliction of the curse, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou must return," was in his case suspended; he ascended to heaven without first going down to the grave. The text says, "He was not, for God took him." And this statement is very satisfactorily explained by the subsequent statement which the apostle has made in his epistle to the Hebrews, "By faith" says he "Enoch was *translated*, that he should not see death." Now with reference to the first of these expressions, we may observe, that it seems intended to convey the intimation that Enoch had suddenly disappeared—he was not found—no longer to be seen; he was not met with in the places of his accustomed resort—"he was not." Those who knew him, and associated with him, no longer saw him, or met with him—he was gone—no more seen.

Then as to the second of these expressions, observe, we have the case more definitely explained—"Enoch was *translated*," caught up from earth to heaven; removed in the twinkling of an eye into another state; taken from walking with God on earth, to dwell with God above.

As to the circumstances under which this event took place, whether it was public or private, whether amidst the solemnities of devotion, or the activities of his toil, whether he was summoned by some solitary ministering angel, or borne upwards by a multitude of the heavenly host, not a word is stated. The fact itself, however, is distinctly affirmed, and no doubt sufficient evidence remained, to assure his cotemporaries that the event had actually taken place. This singular distinction was conferred on Enoch as the reward of his faith—a faith which derived additional honour from the fact of his perpetual progression in holiness amid the sad degeneracy, the abounding iniquity, of the times in which he lived. It is very apparent, my brethren, that the holy and devoted of his time were few, and far between; and, certainly, that must have been a faith by no means feeble, which could stand and grow, amidst a tide of wickedness so strong.

It is also to be observed, that Enoch, as I have already intimated, was a preacher—a prophet; and we are told in the epistle of Jude, that one chief topic of his ministry was this—"The coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Now this passage is very suggestive; it will perhaps

throw some considerable light both on the heroism of Enoch's faith, and the design of Enoch's end. The reference to "hard words," or hard speeches, would seem to imply, that Enoch was subjected to ribaldry and scorn in the public exercise of his prophetic office. As he warned the ungodly, and proclaimed a judgment to come, with proud lips and contemptuous sneer, they would tauntingly ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and as they saw no outward and visible sign of his approach, they would exultingly impute it to his own enthusiastic folly, or his own hypocritical sanctity. But, mark you, Enoch was not to be defeated; Enoch's faith rose triumphant in the storm; Enoch stood and braved it all, unshaken as the rock amid the tempest; and when his work was finished, then God signally rewarded him.

To furnish an actual demonstration of another state; to give a glorious and actual evidence of a state of retribution in another and an eternal world; to strengthen the faith of the weak, and to convince the doubting sceptical unbeliever, who had derided Enoch so much, God came and took him immediately from their midst, and forthwith took him to himself. And this was a change for which Enoch was pre-eminently ready. For three hundred years he had been walking on the precincts of glory, and doubtless he was glad to get in. His spirit would instinctively recoil at the wickedness which everywhere abounded; his elevated soul would be shocked, and grieved, and long to be gone; and God granted his desire, and miraculously removed him. Perhaps it took place in some solitary spot to which he had retired to pour out his sorrow, or to engage in devout meditation and prayer. I do not imagine, however, that he ascended exactly as he was; that he underwent no physical change: his body was doubtless transformed in some mysterious way, which none of us can fully comprehend. The natural body became a spiritual body, the corruptible put on incorruption; it was changed; it resembled the body of the glorified Redeemer when he ascended; it was etherealised, sublimated, transformed. He was not unclothed, but clothed upon. The body he possessed was no longer governed by the laws of matter, but fitted for a higher sphere, and sublimer occupations. Oh! in a moment the sackcloth of the prophet was dropped off, and the habiliments of the heavenly hero put on! In a moment his raiment became of spotless white, and his eye darted with unearthly and celestial fire! His countenance shone like the sun; the corruptible put on incorruption; earth receded from his view; heaven opened to his wondrous gaze; the harps of ten thousand seraphs greeted his approach! He passed the portal, trod the golden streets, and took the conqueror's crown; and he who walked with God on earth, sat down with God in heaven.

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." And why, brethren, should such a miracle as this be thought incredible? Why should He who formed, and fashioned, and framed the human body, be deemed incompetent to change, and transform, and fit it for a higher and sublimer range? Oh, ye timid trembling saints! wherefore do ye doubt? If he could change the body of Enoch, how easily can he change the bodies of believers at the last great day! "The trumpet shall sound; the dead shall be raised." They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south; from the soldier's gory field, and the ocean's briny deep; from the desolate sandy plain, and the mountain's gloomy caverns; for "this corruptible shall put on incorruption." We shall be changed as with the very celerity of lightning; we shall rise to meet our Lord in the air, and enter heaven, and be for ever with him. The Lord Jesus "shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

Now, you have heard, my brethren, of the heroism of Abel and of Enoch, but have you like precious faith? An amiable temper is not a regenerated heart. Whatever your moral excellencies without that one great act—submission to the plan of grace, there can be no hope whatever for you.

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You can neither walk with God on earth, nor dwell with God in heaven, unless you believe on him who died and rose again, and liveth at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Behold a greater than Enoch is here. It is the Saviour of sinners, the Friend of man, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. You must die; you cannot escape as Enoch did. But O! if you have but an interest in his great and glorious work, he will gild the passage with celestial light, and take your spirit upward to the world in which the holy and the happy dwell. I come then, to-night, to ask your *hearts*; yes, your *hearts*! for him who died for you. Oh! for the honour of serving God, loving God, honouring God, walking with God! What honour can be placed in comparison, or competition with this? This is the true heroism; this the sublimest chivalry; this the most lasting renown; this the most brilliant victory! The names of a Martin, or a Williams, or a Moffat will live embalmed in deeds of moral splendor, when "the cloud capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself," shall have vanished like the pageant of a dream! The father of Henry Martin derives more honour from a son so good and great, than Philip, King of Macedon, the father of Alexander, the conqueror of the world! "Therefore, be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Amen.

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The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS, AND THEIR VAIN REQUEST.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. W. S. EDWARDS,

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, CITY ROAD, SUNDAY EVENING,
NOVEMBER 2, 1851.

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."—MATT. XXV. 8.

WE have here an allusion to a custom of the country in which our Lord lived. It is taken from a Jewish wedding; and a brief sketch of the circumstances which attended the ceremony, will better enable us to comprehend the meaning of the passage. The marriage was performed at sunset; and it took place in this manner:

First, the bridegroom, accompanied by numerous attendants, proceeded to the house of the father of the bride, where a feast was held, which lasted several days. At the close of this period, the bride was conducted with great pomp from the dwelling of her father to that of her husband, where another feast was also held. This latter event commonly took place at midnight. A public bridal procession was formed; and to render it the more imposing, a number of virgins came forth to meet them, each one bearing in her hand a blazing torch. The procession then moved forward to the house of the husband; the marriage supper began; the invited guests, who were present, shared in the entertainments, while all others who might come after, were peremptorily excluded.

If you read at your leisure the preceeding chapter, you will find that our Lord is here speaking of the day of judgment, and he refers to this ordinary usage of society for the purpose of illustrating some of the circumstances and some of the facts of that eventful period. The coming of the bridegroom is intended to represent the coming of the Son of Man; the bride is intended to represent the church on earth; and the wise and foolish virgins are intended to denote the present imperfect and mixed state of that church; some being really the subjects of divine grace, and others having only the "form of godliness, without the power."

In the parable of which our text forms a part, the virgins are supposed to have been ignorant of the exact moment when the procession would leave the house of the father of the bride; and in consequence of this, they are supposed to have gone out early, and to have lingered on the pathway until they caught a glimpse of its approach. A part of these virgins, supposing that there would

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be no delay—supposing that the marriage train would come immediately, only took with them sufficient oil to last them for a given period, and very soon having become exhausted, they appealed to the others in the language immediately before us, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.”

To shew the solemn lesson which these few words teach, will be our business this evening. Remember, beloved, what we say, and may the Lord give you understanding.

We propose to consider three things. *The persons by whom this request was presented; the reason upon which this request was founded; and the refusal by which this request was succeeded*—“Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.”

First, then, we propose to consider *the persons by whom this request was presented*. They are called by our Lord, “foolish virgins;” and you will observe that their folly was at first imperceptible, both to themselves and to others; in fact, they so closely resembled the wise virgins, that, to all outward appearance, there was no difference between the one and the other: they belonged to the same company of attendants; they were dressed in the same wedding attire, bearing in their hand the same blazing lamp, and they were all in expectation of the same approaching bridegroom. In the language of Scripture, the Lord Jesus Christ is styled the “Husband of his Church;” and the church is emphatically styled, his “bride.” By the “bridegroom,” therefore, our Lord clearly intends us to understand *himself*, and by the “foolish virgins,” he evidently means a certain class of persons—a class of persons, who, although closely identified with his people in outward appearance, are yet not of the same mind with them in reality. Nor, brethren, is it possible to suppose that these terms have reference to those sinners who are living in open profaneness, for the entire structure of the parable presents a palpable contradiction of this assumption. It is, for instance, distinctly affirmed that with the rest of the virgins they “went forth to meet the bridegroom;” and how could a statement like this be made of the openly wicked, when so far from expecting the coming of their Lord, they are seldom found to bestow even a solitary thought on the subject? No, my dear hearers; our Lord is referring not to openly wicked or profane persons, but to self-deceived professors; to those tares which grow up with the wheat, and which are so much like the wheat, that the common eye can discern no difference between the one and the other. They had the lamp of an outward profession, but they had not the oil of grace to keep it burning. They professed to love Christ; to look for his appearing, but their profession was governed by no vital and holy influence; sanctified by no indwelling spirit; distinguished by no abiding permanent principle. Alas! the form of godliness was their’s—the power they never knew! Such was the character of the persons by whom this request is supposed to have been presented; and well would it be for us, if in this solemn consecrated hour, and in anxious solicitude for the true honour of our own condition and the ultimate welfare of the spirit that dwells within us, each one would ask for himself the question, “Lord is it I?”

Oh my hearers! if at this moment he were to unveil himself in our midst,

if at this moment he were to stand before us a visible spectator, would he not look around on this assembly with a piercing eye, and would he not raise his hand, and point that hand, and fix that eye upon some of us, and say with a stern though pitying voice, "Where is the oil in your lamps?" Let us invite his scrutiny, ere it be too late to secure his grace; and from each heart let the prayer arise and ascend, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; see if there be any evil way within me; and lead me in the way everlasting." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Secondly. *The reason upon which this request was founded.* "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The procession had begun to move. These virgins starting from their slumber at the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," were now startled and confounded by the fact that the lamps which they had brought to throw a brilliance around the midnight scene, were just on the point of expiring, and that no oil was left in their vessels to replenish and enkindle their lamps, and placed in these circumstances, they appealed to the rest of the company in the language selected as our text. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." Now, you are doubtless aware, that in the language of Scripture, light is the common emblem of hope; the ordinary symbol of prosperity, and therefore, the extinction of that light must of necessity, imply the termination of the one, and the entire destruction of the other. "How often," says Job, "is the candle of the wicked put out;" that is to say, how often is their hope suddenly extinguished. "The light," says Solomon, "of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out." Now, here you have an explanation of the language of "their lamps having gone out." You are to understand, that having reached the end of their journey, they now discover that every hope on which that vain profession rested, was swept from under them, and they found themselves at last involved in moral darkness as dense and obscure as that which reigned o'er the wild and untutored savage of the forest or desert.

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." It was the cry of unexpected surprise. The lamps of those foolish virgins had been burning until midnight, and certain it is, that men may assume to themselves the profession of the Gospel, like Ananias and Sapphira, and others of whom we read in Scripture, and proceed well nigh to the end of their earthly existence, in their outward adherence to that Gospel, and yet fail at last of the grace of God! Though the structure be reared on a false and unsafe foundation, yet it may brave many a storm, ere the last whirlwind shall rise, and gather, and sweep it from its basis; many a faithful sermon may be heard, and many a solemn warning uttered, and many a stroke of sorrow inflicted, while yet the victim of guilty self-delusion may be reposing in the slumber of his false and perilous confidence, only to be aroused and startled by the thrilling pearl of the Archangel's trumpet; the solemn and startling summons, "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment!" "Behold, he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him;" and "Many," says our Lord, "will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord! have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? But then will I profess unto them, I never knew

you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity!" "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out;" so said the foolish virgins; and it was the cry of un-anticipated destitution. Their lamps had gone out at the very moment when their gleaming lustre was more especially required. The hour of midnight had come, the bridal procession was approaching, the wise virgins were ready; but at the very moment when their attendance was required, they were unprepared! And, my brethren, though there is not a single hour in human history, when the grace of the Holy Spirit is not needed, or when we can be safe, or happy, apart from his sanctifying and his preserving power, yet there are periods when that grace and the consciousness of that acceptance with God, which it is his prerogative to impart, are especially required, and when without that grace, and the consciousness of that acceptance, not a ray of joy can gleam on the chamber of the soul, and not a beam of hope can kindle the destiny of the future.

Oh! when cold affliction shall corrode the heart with its keenest pangs, and divide assunder the ties that bind you to all that you hold most dear and precious; remember that then you can have no assurance of hope or help, unless you have now the grace of the Holy Spirit. Oh! when death shall close the eye that looks this evening on the preacher, and silence the tongue that moves in its active motion, or chill the stream of love that links in its healthy vigour, and leave you nothing but an icy stiffened corpse of your former self, a winding sheet your garment, the shroud your dress, the grave your home; remember that then you can have no assurance of hope or help, unless you have now the grace of the Holy Spirit! Oh! when you enter that mysterious and unseen world which lies beyond the boundaries of the present, and stand naked and open to the eye of him with whom you will then have exclusively to do, waiting his solemn, and awful, and terrible sentence, that shall fix your destiny for ever; remember that then you can have no assurance of hope or help unless you have now the grace of the Holy Spirit!

My dear hearers! deceive not yourselves. All else but the grace of God implanted in the heart, and developed in the life, will prove at last but a refuge of lies; and though now, perchance, you may be bound, as by a magic spell, to your false confidence and self-delusion, yet be assured of this, there is not a single hope on which you rest, apart from the grace of God, which will not vanish at last before the burning splendour of the judgment throne, and leave you there only to droop amid the gloom and sorrow of the expected sentence! "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," so said the foolish virgins; and it was the cry of unwarrantable hope. While, then, this request was presented to the wise virgins, the answer which they gave was so decisive, as to shew them the appeal was hopeless, and the expectation was unreasonable. "Not so," said they, "lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." And nothing was more common, nothing more ordinary, than the lesson which we here find inculcated, and to which our attention is here naturally directed.

Passing over much which might form the subject of important observation

we ask, have you not witnessed the unprepared and dying man stricken by the consciousness of the vast difference existing between himself and the pious and devoted christian? Have you not witnessed the victim of guilty, self-delusion in his last moments aroused and startled by the appalling consciousness of the vanity and folly of the path in which he had hitherto been treading? And have you not witnessed those appeals which have been so fervently and imploringly made to others for the help and assistance which they have felt they were unable to bestow? "Oh," says the man, as eternity opens on his gaze, and time has receded from his view, "pray for me!" "Oh," says the dying child of pious parents, for whose sake he hopes that God will overlook his past neglect, and for whose sake he trusts that God will shew him mercy, "pray for me!" "Father Abraham," said the rich man, as he lifted up his eyes from that place of torment, which I pray God none of you may ever enter, "father Abraham, have mercy on me." But not so! Vain, and feeble, and useless will be the help of man. The only fulness that can bless or save, is treasured up in Jesus Christ; the only Saviour is that Saviour from whom cometh every good and perfect gift; the only way to heaven is across the ground where the Lord Jesus bled and died, and there is no other in the universe of God.

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," so said the foolish virgins; and it was the cry of inexcusable neglect. Well indeed did these foolish virgins know that they ought, and that they might, have made a better provision for the occasion which called them forth; the rest of the bridal group had prepared an ample store of oil, and the same opportunities had been afforded to themselves. How, then, could they be free from the charge of neglect, for which there could be no excuse, and for which no apology could be offered? And certain, my hearers, will be found the same solemn fact with regard to all those persons who are destitute of that regenerated nature which we have already placed before you as indispensable to secure a place at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Ah, you may, perhaps, fondly imagine that you will then have excuses to offer, and that you will then have apologies to make which may at least diminish the crime of your neglect, and stay the infliction of your doom. But no! He that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men will scorn and put aside the plea. He will tell you with a stern and imperious voice to be silent, while he utters the sentence of unchanging destiny. And oh, if you have heard, as you have, of the great propitiation for sin, if you have been warned, as you have, to flee from the wrath to come, and seek the shelter of his grace, and the blessing of his grace, can you, then, blame any but yourself? If you have been exhorted, as some of you doubtless have, by a father's tender admonition, and a mother's imploring tears; if you have been blessed, as you have, with Sabbath hours, and Sabbath services and Sabbath appeals, can you then blame any but yourself? If you have been confronted, as you now are, by the exhortation of ministerial faithfulness, and anxious and tender solicitude; if you been beseeched, as in Christ's stead to become reconciled to God; if you have been assured, as you now are, that you all may be saved by the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," can you then blame any but yourself? No!

challenged by the Bridegroom of the church, you will be found without a refuge and without a plea; and when amid the consciousness of your own inexcusable neglect, you utter in the fervour of your inward supplication, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," the only answer that will echo amid the thunder of hell's dread tribunal will be, "Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness." "That servant that knew his his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes."

Thirdly, *The doom by which this request was succeeded.* "While they went to buy," says the parable, "the bridegroom came." Foolish virgins! what did their false profession avail them now? they sought, indeed, to repair the error which they had committed, but the time for doing so had gone by; and while they were essaying to adopt the preparations which they ought to have previously procured, they found to their consternation and alarm, that eternity had opened under them, and that they were lodged in a world of woe, strangers to the heaven of which they fondly dreamed, and strangers to the mercy on which they reckoned. You know my dear hearers, you have heard, and heard often, that there is a "judgment to come."—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." The powers of heaven shall be shaken, the stars shall vanish from their orbits, the legions of glory shall attend his chariot, the nations of the earth shall be gathered at his bar, the captivity of the grave shall be led captive, the powers of hell shall quail before the splendour of his presence, the hypocrite shall be stripped of his pretensions, and the proud pharisee of his boasting; then shall be pronounced the sentence, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous unto life eternal." "Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not."

We have here a solemn representation of what shall be the state of mind of all those persons who are thus banished from his presence, and what shall be the agony and convulsion of their spirits when thus they find the gates of heaven are barred against their entrance, and themselves consigned to hopeless, and unchanging woe. Having resisted innumerable mercies, and innumerable opportunities, they will be found at last standing in tremulous alarm before the closed door, knocking and knocking again for admission; and when the Judge shall answer from within, "I know you not! I know you not!" then will each one be heard crying, in the agony of his disappointed hope, "Lord, Lord! open to me! open to me!" "Am I not the child of pious parents—my earliest accents taught to lisp thy praise? Was I not numbered with the people of thy flock? Lord, Lord! open to me! open to me! Was I not a diligent attendant at thy house? was I not a constant hearer of thy word? was I not a liberal supporter of thy cause? Lord, Lord! open to me! open to me! Was I not rejoicing and active in the advancement of thy truth—and if I was wanting in the one thing, for the absence of which I am now excluded, yet did I not much else to mitigate the crime of my neglect, and stay the infliction of my doom? Lord, Lord! open to me! open to me!" But still the only answer that will echo with a heavier and more dreadful peal will be, "I know you not! I know you not." Alas! the time for mercy will have clean gone; angelic spirits will pronounce, "The

time is past." The terror-stricken, self-deceived, sunk deep amid the gloom of a more than midnight darkness will cry, "Alas! the time is passed! the time is passed!" A thousand demons, starting from the chains that bind them, will thunder back the peal, "The time is passed! the time is passed!" "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and ye are not saved."

Oh! my hearers, blessed be God the time is not passed yet; the period for exclusion is not come yet; the door of hope is not closed yet; but,

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

I ask you, then, can you depart to-night from the house of God, and yet refuse the blessing which is now offered, and which we press you to accept? Ask the ransomed throng in heaven what is the blessing which they all most dearly value, and every voice will answer, "It is salvation by the blood of Christ." Ask the groaning spirits of hell what is the crime which they all most deeply deplore, and every tongue will respond, "it is that we neglected salvation by the blood of Christ." And oh! if we could gather you in your disembodied state, unto the chapel were you are now sitting, when an hundred years shall have passed and gone, and if we could then ask you what is the blessing which you deem most precious, would not every spirit that listened, arise and say with an eloquence such as never fell on human ears, "It is salvation by the blood of Christ?" Can you then neglect it now—can you, I say, neglect it now, and not be chargeable with a folly of which there is no parallel, and a crime for which there is no excuse? Once more, then, we offer you salvation by the blood of Christ. We bring you to-night the oil of gladness; 'tis the spirit's sanctifying power, 'tis the Saviour's smiling love. All the universe invites you to accept it, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost invite you to accept it. All the ransomed saints, all the holy angels, all the saints on earth, invite you to accept it. And is there one among you that will venture to-night to retire and refuse? Is there one against whom, when the cry shall be uttered, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," the door shall then be shut?—Is there one? I pause, that each man and each woman may answer for himself the challenge—is there one? Oh! I charge you that you bear the challenge from the chapel to the closet, and God in infinite mercy grant that when the Son of man shall come in his glory, it may be found that the appeal is not made in vain! "Blessed, ah thrice blessed, are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find ready." Amen, and amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

LIFE, THE SEED TIME FOR ETERNITY.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. JOHN ANGEL JAMES,

(OF BIRMINGHAM,)

AT FALCON SQUARE CHAPEL, SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 16, 1851.

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all; especially unto them who are of the household of faith."—GALATIANS VI. 7—10.

THE language of Holy Scripture is strikingly and profoundly figurative. Its metaphors however are designed less for embellishment than instruction; less to gratify the taste, and please the imagination, than to instruct the judgment, and impress the heart, and assist the memory. They are usually bright and beautiful emblems of truth. They are usually fetched from sources with which we are familiar; though in them there is nothing mean. As the Jews were an agricultural, rather than a commercial people, it was to be expected that their figures of speech would be borrowed much from rural affairs. Hence "sowing" and "reaping" are not unfrequently alluded to in the language of scripture; and these processes are brought forward to illustrate the revelation of God.

There are three kinds of seed time and harvest spoken of in the New Testament. There are the seed time and harvest of the natural earth; there are the seed time and harvest of the gospel dispensation; and there are the seed time and harvest of each man's life. It is of course, to the latter, that the text refers.

In discoursing to you from this impressive passage—and probably a more impressive one can scarcely be found on the pages of inspiration—I shall consider First, the solemn caution; Second, the impressive affirmation; and Thirdly, the practical exhortation which it contains.

In the first place, I am to speak of the solemn caution with which the passage is introduced: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Self-deception, to whatever it refers, is of course an undesirable state of mind; it is a practical lie, which a man who is under its influence, inflicts upon himself. It is to be deeply regretted when a man is deceived in reference to his own health, and imagines that all is sound in his constitution, when the seeds of incipient decay have already struck their roots into his body. It is painful when a man is deceived in reference to his worldly affairs, and he imagines that prosperity is about to crown his industry, when disorder, and confusion, and bankruptcy come upon him. But it is the climax of all mischief of this kind when a man is deceived in reference to his spiritual condition; and to use the language of the earlier part of this chapter—"thinks himself to be something when he is nothing." A mistake of this kind persevered in till death, is an error which requires an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore. The possibility of self-deception in reference to our spiritual condition, is everywhere supposed in the New Testament. Nay, its probability and its certainty are established. And if there was a danger of men becoming objects of self-deception in reference to their spiritual condition, at a time when the profession of christianity exposed men to all kinds of persecution; and it might be supposed to lead none to make it, unless they were

sincere; how much more danger is there in the time and the circumstances in which we live, of making this mistake; when the profession of religion, usually so far from militating against our interest or respectability, advances both.

"Be not deceived," "Not every one," says our Lord, "that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my heavenly Father." "Many"—not one; not some; not a few; but "many will say unto me in that day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? But to them I will say, depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you." O! with what trembling solicitude; with what prayerful concern should we all take up the Bible, and test our own hearts and our own condition by its infallible standard; and there is no other standard by which we should try ourselves. The average degree of religion that prevails around us, should not be that by which we endeavour to ascertain our own safety, but we should go to the word of God, that we may be weighed in its impartial and infallible balances. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked;" that is, he cannot be imposed upon by a false profession. The Word does not of course refer to any derision cast upon the Almighty, for rarely does even blasphemy itself go so far as to do this. It means that God is not imposed upon by a false profession which he considers to be only mocking his omniscience. And it is also to be observed, that the passage is particularly addressed to one class of professors—those who are in danger of the sin of covetousness, and of the commission of this sin in reference to the ministrations of the word, and the services of the sanctuary; for the immediate context runs thus, "Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I now proceed to the second division of the subject, which is to take up the *impressive affirmation that it contains*. And this is expressed first of all generally, and then specifically. It is expressed *generally*, by a reference to rural affairs—to "sowing and reaping;" and it is founded upon that general law of nature, that "like produces like." If a man wishes for barley, he sows barley, and not wheat; if he intends to have wheat, he sows wheat, and not barley. There is an established connexion by the law of nature, between the nature of the seed, and the nature of the crop. So it is in the moral world, and in reference to spiritual things. The idea, as I have said, is first of all presented *generally*—"What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." I know nothing in all the word of God, which presents human life in a more solemn and responsible light than this. We are all "fearfully and wonderfully made." We are more fearfully and wonderfully placed. Our situation, when rightly contemplated, is not only solemn, but awful; for what does the figure—what does the metaphor of the text teach us, but this simple and striking thought, "Life is the seed time for eternity." The seed is our actions, our words, our feelings, our thoughts, our plans, and our purposes; and as we are always acting, or speaking, or thinking, or feeling, or planning, or purposing, we are all always and everywhere sowing, and shall in another world be always reaping as we have sown. You have been sowing to-day for eternity; you are sowing now for eternity. The thoughts that are at this moment, and feelings cherished in your minds, the plans that are formed, the purposes that are fixed at this solemn hour, and in the house of God, will not entirely pass away with the time that they occupy; but when these scenes have all vanished, and we shall have entered into eternity, they will be springing up there, and bearing fruit for ever and ever.

There is not an action that man can perform, nor anything in his mind, partaking of a moral quality; (and how much of all he does, and all that is within him partakes of this quality;) but is seed sown for eternity; and those millions of thoughts, and feelings, actions, words, and purposes, and plans, entering into every man's history—all this is sowing, from which hereafter he will be reaping. This is the impressive idea of the text—"As a man soweth, so shall he reap."

But it is not confined to this general representation, but is drawn out in

two specific varieties. Here are two kinds of seed, and two kinds of crop, spoken of; and we take them as they stand. Here is first, "sowing to the flesh." Now, by these expressions, we are not merely to understand a man's cherishing in his soul the "lust of the flesh," or giving them embodiment in profligate conduct. The word "flesh," is the figurative expression for man's fallen corrupt nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" that which according to ordinary generation is born into the world, is as to its moral condition fleshly, that is, it is corrupt, and therefore "sowing to the flesh means, acting from no higher principle, and under no holier influence than the corrupt nature of the fall; a man who is unconverted, by the grace of God who has not had the nature of the fall taken away, in other words, that *is not regenerated* by the Spirit of God, though he may be amiable in his disposition, though he may be moral in his conduct, though there may be much in other respects that is altogether praiseworthy, yet is sowing to the flesh; he is acting from no higher principle than that which is in his fallen nature, which is "sowing to the flesh." True it is, that many who are in this state go to excesses in iniquity which others do not practice. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Now we come to the crop that is here spoken of which is to be gathered from this seed. Here, again, I would remark, the apostle does not so much mean that in this world men who live in vice, profligacy, and impurity, shall reap a crop; very true, they do so, we know that. Stand forth ye victims of concupiscence, ye martyrs of intemperance, and by your wasted frame, and trembling knees, and terrified imagination, and shortened lives, corroborate the truth of this, that "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption!" Yes! of how many may it be said, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth." Men have gone so far in vice, as to poison all the springs of health, and to sink while living, into a mass of corruption, until at length, earth sickened, and tired of her load, heaved them from her lap, and hell from beneath moved to meet them at their coming. But this is not the whole of the meaning of the text. It does not so much refer to cases of this kind, it looks on to eternity, it is in another world that the reaping is to take place, and it means that all who live from no higher principle than man's corrupt nature, shall in another world reap nothing but what comes from that principle—sin, and death, and misery. Moral corruption will be the eternal crop in the soul of a man who rises not by the power of divine grace above a state of corruption here.

We go on to consider the second kind of seed and crop, "He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Now if our view of the meaning of "sowing to the flesh" be correct, then "sowing to the spirit" must mean acting by faith in Jesus Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, regenerating the nature, implanting a principle of vitality in the soul, which develops itself in all the actions of a holy, and heavenly, and spiritual life. There is, first, "Living in the spirit;" that refers to regeneration, when the principle of life is imparted. Then there is "Walking in the spirit," which refers to sanctification, or the development of spiritual life so imparted. This is "Sowing to the spirit," acting according to the Spirit's direction in the Word, acting under the Spirit's influences in the whole course of a holy and religious life; so that the christian man is perpetually sowing spiritual seed, from which hereafter he is to reap a spiritual and eternal produce. "He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." What a crop! and how certain! The farmer never can depend upon his produce, however good the quality, or however sufficient the quantity of the seed that he sows, he can never be sure but that his hopes will be disappointed; too much wet, or too much drought will destroy the crop; the insect may devour; the foot of man and beast may trample it down, but in this case there is indubitable certainty. "He shall reap life everlasting." It is not a mere peradventure that a life of godliness will end in an eternity of happiness; there is nothing so great as heaven; there is nothing so certain as that heaven shall be the pos-

session of that man who "Soweth to the spirit." No seasons have influence over that crop; no insect, beast, or man, can touch this; it is guaranteed by the promise of infallible truth, and by the power of the omnipotent arm of God; and then I say, What a crop! Oh! christians, raise your minds, if you can, to the loftiness and sublimity of that loftiest and sublimest expression that language ever uttered or ever can utter—"Everlasting Life." What a mystery is life! The most insignificant weed that grows in the scale of existence rises above that splendid Jewel that blazed so lately in the Great Exhibition, or the richest mass of gold that will ever be dug out of any part of the earth; the meanest insect of animal life that crawls in the dust, rises above vegetable life, and is higher in the scale of being than the cedars of Lebanon, or the oak of the forest; the meanest child of the meanest peasant that is to be found on the earth rises in the scale of existence above the largest, and strongest, and highest animal that is not a rational being; the meanest christian, the poorest child of God in all the redeemed family rises in the scale of existence above the greatest philosopher that ever illuminated the earth by his discoveries if he be an unsanctified man; for spiritual life is above that which is intellectual; and then that spiritual life develops itself in eternal life, and there, my hearers, is the result of that life of piety of yours, if, indeed, your's be a life of piety carried on to the end—if you, by the aid of God's Spirit, are sustained. Eternal life will follow this sowing to the spirit — this spiritual holy existence upon earth, not in the way of a reward of debt, but of grace; not in the way of desert, yet infallible, certainly, after all.

But before we go on to the third part of the subject we shall pause here to make three reflections. First, we learn from this subject how close and inseparable is the connexion between man's present and his future history. I do not believe that there is one single action partaking of a moral character which any one performs in this world, that will have no connexion with his eternal destiny. I believe that the connexion is so close that in every instance of good or evil, there is something that connects the man that performs it with eternity as to his destiny. Ye are fearfully and wonderfully placed. But secondly. Another reflection I make upon the subject so explained is this—that the misery and happiness of men in another world will not all arise from sources *without* themselves, but from sources that are *within* themselves. Every man will not only go from hence into heaven or into hell, but he will carry his own heaven or his own hell with him. He will acquire it here, and he will carry it hence.

Take the sinner—the unconverted sinner—a man that "soweth to the flesh." He goes to eternity; what does he carry? not his wealth, for he leaves all that behind. Not his pleasures, these terminate for ever with his life; but he carries all the faculties of his soul—he carries himself. There is his understanding, his intellect, he carries that; to understand more clearly than he ever did in this world, or than he ever would, the holiness and justice of God's character, the purity and obligation of God's law, the exceeding sinfulness of that sin of which he thought so little here. Oh, how his understanding will widen to take in these vast subjects in all their comprehension. But what will the knowledge of them do for him? Add to his misery! He carries with him his heart—that is his affections: these go, but the objects on which they were fixed upon earth are all gone; the gratifications that delighted him here he will not have there; he will have all the cravings of an evil nature for these, but no one of them to satisfy these yearnings of his heart. Like Tantalus, he will have the object of desire perpetually before him, seemingly; in imagination approaching his lips, but the moment it seems to be near it flies off again, and he thirsts and thirsts for ever for his former gratifications, when not one of them can reach him. He will carry his memory with him. Oh, that sting in the expression of Abraham, "Son," addressing the rich man, "remember! remember!" And thrown back upon the past, he called up his memory, and what he had to remember! I believe that memory will be

so perfect in the other world that a man's whole life will pass before him again, and he will see himself in one complete view, so that he will be living over again the life that he lived upon earth; he will remember every sin he committed, every aggravation he indulged, every temptation he complied with, every sabbath he misspent, every sermon he neglected, every advice he spurned, every opportunity he let slip—all will be remembered, and thus he will be reaping—reaping by his very memory. And then there will be his conscience: he will carry his conscience with him. And then it will arouse from its slumbers like a sleeping lion, alarmed, and eager to sieze its victim. His conscience will be employed for ever in pouring into his cup the venom, wormwood and gall of tormenting reflections.

The wicked will carry his sins with him in their root, in his own nature; he carries that corrupt nature with him. And here, observe, are some of the sources of his torment, and principal ones too. I know there are some without him; there is the wrath to come that will

“Beat upon his naked soul with one eternal storm.”

There are companions, but I tell you, my hearers, that a man's punishment in another world, if he continue to live in sin and impenitence here, will be self-imposed from the lashes of his conscience, and the awful interpretation of his judgment, of all the sins that he has ever committed.

I turn to the pleasanter subject. The happiness of the righteous will arise from himself in a measure. There will be the presence of God; there will be the beatific vision of Christ; there too the society of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect. But this is not all; the good man carries himself—his renewed and sanctified self. He too carries his intellect, to have the light poured into it from the fountain of celestial radiance, till he attains the glow of perfect knowledge. He too carries his heart: with all that heart's affections, while all the objects on which they fixed that affection on earth will be present, to yield him satisfaction for ever and ever. He will carry his memory too: to think of all he did for Christ, and all he wished to do on earth. He will carry his conscience: and it will be as an angel for ever smiling upon him, and never for a moment wearing a single frown. He will carry his disposition with him; supreme love to God, and his love to man; and let me ask if the Christian can have a higher heaven or a richer bliss than perfect love to God, and perfect love to his fellows. When the last feeling of malice has gone from the heart, and when the last coldness shall have been experienced, he will warm into a glow of perfect and eternal ardour towards God. Is not that heaven? The Christian has it in part here; he begins his heaven upon earth, in that very love of God, and love to man—therefore, from thence in a great measure, will his happiness arise in heaven. But there is another idea, the text to me establishes the absolute certainty of different degrees of punishment for the wicked in another world and of rewards—rewards of grace I admit, to the righteous: “What a man soweth, that shall he also reap;” not only in quality, but in quantity. We know this for certain with respect to the wicked, for it is said, “He that knew not his Master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes; but he that knew his Master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Here, then, in plain, simple language, a fact is established, that the wicked in another world will be punished according to the amount of their knowledge in this world. God's rule is a rule of *proportion*; and we are told by the Apostle, that “they that sin without law, shall be judged without law;” that is, they that sin without revelation, shall be tried without revelation; they shall be tried by the law of reason and conscience; but those that sin *with* the law, that is revelation, shall be tried by the Bible. Now if this be certain—and it is certainly impossible to controvert it—that the wicked will be miserable in proportion to their sin on earth, reasoning from analogy, it is equally certain that the rewards of the righteous—(still I say the rewards of grace,) will be in proportion to their characters or lives upon earth. But we need not depend upon analogical reasoning; it is plainly declared in the 9th chapter of the 2nd epistle to the Corinthians;

taking up the figure of the text, "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." "The cup of cold water," we are told, "shall have its reward." In what these different degrees of glory will consist it is not for us to determine. Whether it will be a larger capacity of intellect for happiness or love—whether they will consist of higher posts of service in the organised society of heaven, we cannot determine; very probably the latter. Heaven will not be an immense mob, a vast multitude without organization: it is represented as a state of bliss, order, and arrangement; therefore, in all probability, the different rewards will consist in higher degrees of honour in the celestial world. Nor is it for a moment to be imagined that these different degrees of honour will at all disturb the harmony of that place. My hearers we shall all be perfect there. A perfection excluding all envy, all malice; we shall be so swallowed up in the glory of God; in his truth and justice, and the propriety of all his arrangements, that we shall even rejoice there, to see others that have risen higher in grace than ourselves and higher in glory. Every mind will be perfectly happy and perfectly content. All vessels will be full, though all vessels may not be precisely of the same capacity; and the doctrine of future degrees of glory may be legitimately brought forward as an inducement to seek higher degrees of grace upon earth.

We now, therefore advance to the last head of discourse which is to take up the practical exhortation which is founded upon this warning and this affirmation. Here is something to be done, and here is the manner in which it is to be done. Here is something to be done, "*good*," "As we have opportunity let us do good." The word *good* has, in Scripture, a general and special meaning; the general meaning is all kinds of moral excellence; the special meaning is benefaction, and it is in that sense that it is usually to be understood as employed by the sacred writers; hence, the meaning of that expression, "for a just man," that is a man who merely pays his debts and gives to others what is due, "none would die, but peradventure for a *good* man,"—a man who in addition to justice, is benevolent and philanthropic, "some would be found even to die;" therefore *good* means benevolence, and it is very comprehensive in its bearing. It includes relief of misery, instruction of the ignorant, supply of want; it in other words, averts misery and produces happiness. Christians! this is your vocation. You are specially called to do good; you are first of all to be just men, but you are not to stop there; you are to be good men; you are not merely to give to others what they can claim, but what they have no right to claim on the score of justice, but which God gives them a claim for on the score of benevolence. To do good, is to be like God; that which the creature imposes upon himself is to do evil. Oh! the honour of doing good; the very heathens have confessed, that the good man most resembled the gods.

Then here is the manner of doing it. Here are the objects, "unto all men, especially unto the household of faith." We are to begin with Christians, they are our first objects of kind regard, they are our brethren and sisters in Christ, they are the children of God, they are our fellow travellers to heaven, with them we are to spend eternity; therefore if there were two men in need, and it were not in our power to do good to both, we must first assist the Christian. But we are not placed in this dilemma, and therefore we are not to stop with our fellow-Christians, we are to add to brotherly kindness, charity, that is to do good to all men. The religion of Jesus Christ knows nothing of national antipathy, sectarian prejudices, religious bigotry. The gospel allows us not to draw an enclosure around the righteous, and say, all our goodness shall be dispensed to these; it commissions us to break down that barrier, and to go out into all the world and "do good to all men as we have opportunity." It is the glory of the gospel, that it inculcates a spirit of universal benevolence, not of special philanthropy which I believe we are called into existence to try to do, to endeavour to plant a system of universal benevolence upon the destruction of individual tenderness. The order of nature is from particulars to general, and the order of grace is according to the order of nature. We

are to begin with the church of God, but we are not to stop with it. Here is the rule of our benevolence, "As we have opportunity." "Be mindful of opportunity," said one of the Grecian sages to his pupils, "Be mindful of opportunity." In this, the child and the philosopher agreed, "Be mindful of opportunity." Life is an opportunity, which death snatches from us; wealth is an opportunity which a reverse of circumstances takes away. It is recorded of that distinguished philanthropist, that lived seventy or eighty years ago, John Thornton, a name ever to be honoured, that on one occasion, an application was made to him for relief: the cheque was drawn; a letter immediately afterwards came to him; his countenance became serious, thoughtful, somewhat gloomy; he requested the cheque back again from the applicant, who naturally enough concluded he had just heard some bad news, and was about to cancel the cheque and give nothing. He drew a cheque for double the amount; the applicant wondered; it was explained, "I have just received intelligence of a vessel lost that was not insured; God seems to be taking my wealth from me; I have it now to give, and therefore I double the amount." This was understanding the expression, "As ye have opportunity." Youth is an opportunity. Oh! my young friends, now unembarrassed or unimpeded by the cares of domestic life, what a happy season is yours for getting good and doing good, did you but know it: O, improve the opportunity! The cough of sickness may be no great distance from you, and to recline there unable to move, memory and conscience reminding you that when you had opportunity in health and strength, you did not improve it. We have all, I suppose, had occasion to regret the loss of opportunity, therefore let us improve them as they come, and "as we have opportunity, let us do good."

Here, in this beautiful passage, is presented to us the perseverance of our benevolence, "Let us not be weary in well-doing." And if ever there was an age when this admonition was peculiarly in season, it is that in which we now live. There is—except where the spirit of benevolence is deeply rooted, and very active, and where it is felt to be a privilege to do good, as well as a duty—there is a danger of growing weary in it. "But the requests are so frequent;" the more the better; it is a sign that the world is improving, and that God is blessing mankind. "But others do not their share." Never mind that; if they will not perform their duty, that is no reason why you should not perform yours. If they put from them the privilege of blessing others, do not put it away from yourself. "But the objects of my benevolence are so ungrateful." Do good for the sake of doing it; whether men reward you with gratitude or not, you have the reward of your conscience, and you shall have the reward of God, if men don't reward you. "But I am growing old." Work to the last. This is a warfare from which there can be no discharge; this is a field from which the labourer must not retire until the Master calls him out: the last throb of your heart, the last energy of your frame, is deserved as it is demanded for Christ. Like the venerated pastor of the church in this place, go on working and bearing fruit even to old age. "Let us not be weary in well doing." Is God weary of doing us good? How long he has been doing good to some of you, and how much he has done!

Then here is the *reward* of benevolence—"In due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." It is only the man that endureth to the end that can be saved; and it is only the philanthropist who goes on his career of mercy to the end, that will receive the reward at last. But I cannot stop here; I must go back to the commencement of the discourse; I must go back to the impressive idea—"Life is the seed time for eternity." Can anything be more impressive? Oh! my hearers, let the preacher, with all the earnestness and all the impressiveness that he can command and exhibit, let him appeal to you on the value and importance of human life. Life—that life, which with many of you is so far gone—that life, upon which many of you are but just entering. Oh! that you would consider the value of human life. And the value of that life arises, of course, from the end which God proposes in giving that life to you, and

which you ought to understand and propose to yourself. Life is running on; the stream never stops; the hand of the clock of your existence never pauses, though moment after moment is all that is taken away of course at a time; but it is ever running on, and ever running out. What are you doing to-night? What are you doing with that one life—and you can never have but one in this world—which God has given you?

Have you ever sat down, and in a serious moment paused upon the question, What is life? What is it for? Ah! what? A seed time for eternity; the sowing time for endless existence! A state of discipline and probation for eternity. Do you think God gave you that intellect—that noble intellect, that will, that imagination, that memory, that heart, that conscience, merely to grope in the dust—merely to secure as much wealth as you can, and as much comfort as wealth can secure? It would be unworthy of God himself to create man for such a purpose as this. God has created you for eternity; through eternity you must live, whether you desire it or not. You may change the mode, and you may change the place of your existence; but out of existence you can never, never go! You are in it, and it must be perpetuated through everlasting ages. What are you doing with life? The Bible tells what you ought to be doing with it—"The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy time for ever." The business of life is told us in that language of the Saviour, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." The salvation of the soul is the chief end of life. All here is initial, not final; preparatory, not ultimate: this is the causal period; here is causation, but hereafter will be effect. As a man lives here, so must he live in eternity. You are forming an everlasting character—you are forming the character that you must carry with you into eternity. Daily and hourly you are building up that character which is to endure for ever! What would you be in eternity—what would you be through eternity—what kind of man who is to live for ever in another world? It will be according to the character that you form in this! Oh! to-night, from this impressive passage, take up the right view of life. You are here, I tell you again and again, to repetition, always sowing; in eternity you will be always reaping. Imagine that five years hence there was a point, or rather a line, in your being—existence—history; on the one side of which were honour, and wealth, and happiness—on the other, were poverty, and degradation, and misery; and it depended upon your conduct in the interval between the present moment and the time when this line shall commence. On which side of it would you take your station? and how would you act? Would you listen to the voice of companions, or the silent song of pleasure, whereby it indisposed you to take the right side of the line? Oh, no! You would say, "Honour or disgrace is before me; one or the other I *must* have. Everything depends on the manner in which I conduct myself in the present moment, and on that point of my existence!" What is this, did it exist—what would it be, this imaginary honour—what is it to the situation in which you are placed? Consider for a moment of your death—there is the point on which the hinge of your destiny shall rest! As death finds ye, so will judgment come to ye; and as judgment leaves ye, so will eternity find ye; and it depends on you, under God and God's Spirit, which is offered to you, what your future destiny shall be—which side of the line you will take; whether that in which heaven and all its glory shall be found—or that in which hell, with all its horrors are placed? Oh, my hearers, may God, in his infinite mercy, direct you upon the subject, which side of the line ye shall take for eternity; on the right is heaven, and on the left, the bottomless pit. Do not make I beseech you, one grand mistake, as to the end and the purpose of life, and live for this world, instead of that which is to come; a mistake which, to repeat an expression I have already employed, will require an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore! Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

MAN'S DEPENDENCE AND GOD'S MUNIFICENCE.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. W. S. EDWARDS,

(OF CITY ROAD,)

AT MARE STREET CHAPEL, (DR COX'S,) HACKNEY, SUNDAY MORNING,
NOVEMBER 23, 1851,

On behalf of the Haverstock Hill Orphan Working School.

"But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."
—PHILIPPIANS IV. 19.

POVERTY has its honours as well as its disadvantages. The Philippians were poor, but their poverty was no hinderance to their usefulness. Poor as they were, they were given to hospitality, and ready to distribute. The fountain of sympathy was not sealed, but open and active; and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For the apostle Paul they had a strong and devoted attachment. It was he who had first planted the gospel in their cities, and gathered them together in the fellowship of the saints. From his lips they had first listened to the truth as it in Jesus; and by his instrumentality, they had been "brought out of darkness into marvellous light." Now, they felt the obligation, and they yielded to its claims. Their gratitude was practical; it was made manifest in deeds as well as words. On the principle that they who preach the gospel, should live by the gospel, they ministered to his necessities; to the utmost of their power they contributed to his temporal support. And their gratitude was not only *practical*, but *permanent*—distance did not terminate it. Though they were separated from the apostle in body, yet they were not separated from him in mind. Long after he had left them, they thought of him, prayed for him, bore him in remembrance, and sympathised with him in his work. He had gone to preach the gospel in the cities of Greece and Asia Minor; and they were largely concerned in the success of the enterprise. Lest he should suffer or be in want, or lest he should incur the imputation of interested motives, by becoming chargeable to the new converts that might be gathered in, they furnished him with subsequent and frequent pecuniary aid.

Paul was now a prisoner—a prisoner of Rome; even here Paul was not forgotten. They were not, like the swallow, frightened off by the frosty air of wintry affliction; they were like the brave ocean bird, walking forth upon the swell,

"When seas are waxing fierce, and tim'rous wings are wending back to land."

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Though in bonds, Paul was felt for, and cared for; they dispatched a messenger from Philippi to Rome to ascertain his wants, and immediately relieved them. That was kind, feeling, considerate, and generous; many who might have done so, and who, perhaps, had more means for doing so, had not done so; and Paul felt it, valued it, was grateful for it. It was not so much the gift, as the tender consideration, of which the gift was a tangible evidence; it was the index of their state of feeling, as a church, towards him; and viewing it in this light, Paul appreciated it, and thanked them for this manifestation of their kind regard. The epistle before us was evidently penned with this express design; you find it abounding with expressions of wisdom and expressions of gratitude. There is a beautiful strain of affectionate commendation running through the whole of it; and of this character is the language of the text.

It speaks of "supply;" supply from God. What they had given to him, God would return in tenfold abundance. They had been careful for him, and God would be careful for them; they had ministered to his necessities, and God would minister to their's; their liberality should not go unrewarded, but receive a double recompense. "Even," says he, "in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessities, not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound. I am full; having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing unto God." What you have done, you have done as unto God, and God will accept it; nay more, God will return it; as you have supplied my need, so my God shall supply your need, and supply it too according to no mean measure, according to no scanty estimate—"My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." This is a promise which, like all the other promises of the Bible, admits of a present and a future, as well as an immediate application; it comes, not only to the saints at Philippi, but to the saints of God in all ages; for all are saved by the same grace, redeemed by the same blood, entitled to the same peculiar distinctions; and therefore, every believer in Christ Jesus may claim and appropriate for himself what is here affirmed; it was intended that he should do this; expressly recorded for this purpose. We shall therefore be fully justified, if we view it in this light; indeed it would be an illegitimate interpretation of the text to restrict it to this; it will be perhaps more conducive to our profit if we try to look at it in its general, as well as its particular application.

Let us, therefore, try to examine it as we find it developed in this two-fold aspect. We invite your attention to two facts. *The dependence of man, and the munificence of God.* "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

In the first place we shall call your attention to *the dependence of man*. This fact is very plainly assumed in the text; it speaks of "need," wants, and necessities on the part of the Philippians, which could not be met by themselves. In common with the rest of mankind, both before and since their day, they

were dependent on a power superior to their own for the supply of their temporal and spiritual necessities. Going back to the beginning, we discover on the testimony of inspiration, that the great Spirit, whom we denominate God, when the earth was without form and void, he called it by his mandate from chaos and confusion into order and beauty. Having divided the respective elements, he arranged them in their proper conditions and relations; he placed in the firmament "great lights," and these were for signs and for seasons; to be the earth's great time-keepers, to mark, by their alternate rising and setting, the consecutive advances of successive times, and to give warmth by the lustre of their beams. The world was clothed with verdure, and populated with cattle, and fowl, and creeping things. And thus beautifully completed, the great God who made it, took complacency in it; it rose before the eye of his Omniscience, one of the brightest and fairest orbs in the range of his vast creation; and thus viewing it on the throne from whence he spoke it into being, he pronounced it to be "good."

But his work had not yet ceased, all this was only a preparatory process, a process to an end. The earth was created, beautifully fitted up, as the abode of a new race of intelligences who had not yet appeared. It was to be a splendid mansion; a palace clothed for the inheritance of man; and when thus made ready, he placed man in it. Taking the dust of the earth, he constructed this new creature after the image of himself. Thus constructed, moulded and fashioned after the pattern of himself, he breathed into this inanimate structure the breath of life. The body was of the dust, the spirit was the breath of God. But no sooner had God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, than the fire of thought sparkled in his eye; the glow of an intelligent being beamed in his face; he stood erect, walked and talked with his Maker, as a man talketh with his friend; found himself endowed with faculties of thought and reflection, faculties of enjoyment; the head and founder of a new race, commissioned and empowered to perpetuate the same order of beings throughout the successive generations of the earth.

Such is the substance of the narrative which Scripture has furnished, as to the origin of that existence which we possess. I shall not stop this morning, either to discuss its accuracy, or defend its probability. I am not preaching to a congregation of infidels; we believe these statements to be facts, because this book contains them; and recognizing the truthfulness of what is here affirmed, we come at the source of that existence which we possess ourselves. Our dependance is visible in the original creation of our race. "He hath made us and not we ourselves." "From the beginning," says the Saviour, when discussing with the Pharisees on the law of divorcement, "From the beginning, God created them male and female." That mysterious thing which we call life, which you and I possess, and which gives to us so much enjoyment, is the gift of Omnipotence, the inspiration of the Almighty. He gives, and he takes it at his pleasure. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." So far then, we are dependant upon God for existence, the basis and foundation of all subsequent dependance.

This brings me to the second department of the subject. As we are depend-

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ant upon God for existence, so too are we dependant upon God for the continuation of that existence. As he made the world, and fitted it up for man's accommodation, so too he graciously exercises over it a kind and overruling Providence; a wise and gracious rule, and this rule is expressly ordained for man's happiness and welfare. "He maketh the sun to shine on the evil and on the good." "He sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust," and he does it all for man; for the supply of man's temporal necessities; that man may have food and raiment, and all things richly to enjoy. For man, he sendeth the springs into the vallies which run among the hills; for man, he watereth the earth from his chambers; he maketh the bud to blossom and bring forth fruit; for man, he has enriched the earth with its minerals and metals; and covered its surface with verdure; the oak of the forest, and the plant of the field.

"The sun that walks his airy way,
To light the world, and give the day;
The moon that shines with borrowed light;
The stars that gild the gloom of night;
The seas that roll unnumbered waves;
The wood that spreads its shady leaves;
The field whose ears conceal the grain;
The yellow treasure of the plane."

The food we eat, the raiment we put on, the health we enjoy, the personal and relative advantages we all possess, they are all the gifts of his bounty; they are all the bestowment of his munificence. What! you independant of God! Then why do you eat his food? You independant of God! Then why do you tread upon his earth? You independant of God? Then why do you breathe his air? Independant of God! Tell him so; ask him to take back all he has given you; let him answer your request, and what have you left; where are you yourself? Why every thing is gone, and you yourself banished like the mists on the brow of the mountain. You perhaps think now in your prosperity, that you are the architect of your own fortune; that your prosperity is just the consequence, just the result of your own skill, and your own foresight. But, who gave you that skill? Who endowed you with that foresight? Why there have been men with quite as much skill, and quite as much foresight as yours; and yet they have always had to row against the stream, the tide has always gone against them. Is the race always to the swift? Is the battle always to the strong? To God, and to God alone, you owe it all. "The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season."

This brings me to the third fact; as he made the world, and rules it, so too, he has graciously redeemed it. And here we are dependant upon him in a still greater sense; for the supply of necessities which are far more urgent, and far more pressing. We were ruined, and only he could recover us, and he came to our relief; opened a way of access to himself, gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for all the world. "Made himself to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." We are fallen, and on him we are dependant for restoration; we are polluted, and on him we are dependant for sanctification; we are helpless, and on him we are dependant for assistance; we are often in manifold temptation, and trial, and on him we are dependant for deliverance, and the great God has come and met the case; he has given us his gospel; shewn us a plan by which his strength may be made perfect in our weakness; revealed a source of everlasting happiness and consolation; something to gladden our dejected spirits, and make our hearts to glow and burn with inexhaustible delight. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Ah! my brethren, so vast are man's necessities, that nothing but this Gospel can give you relief.

Of Alexander, we are told, that "he sat down and wept, because he had not another world to conquer." After he had swept the habitable globe with his legions, still there was an "aching void," in Alexander's bosom, which made him pant and long for something nobler, and something better than he had ever yet acquired. And Alexander was the type of man in every age, and every circumstance. There is a craving in his nature, which nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, can solace or remove. Oh! could you grasp in thought the mighty and the insignificant, throughout the universe at large; could you explore every world in the firmament above you, could you dive deep into the recesses of the earth beneath you, still the vast desires of the spirit within you, would not be satisfied or met; still it would pant and long for something more, and something too which neither any nor all of these could give. So vast, so capacious, so immense are your necessities, that nothing but the fulness of him who filleth all in all, can give you satisfaction, can bring to your spirit relief; but that fulness the great God has mercifully granted—"My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Secondly, *The munificence of God.* We shall perhaps have a clearer view of this part of the subject, if we take the text and try to analyze a few of its terms. The first of these terms which we propose briefly to examine, has express reference to a certain limitation. The promise is restricted; it is bounded not by our desires, but by our necessities. "My God shall supply"—What?—All you wish? No; "My God shall supply all your need." Oh, the wisdom of this! It proceeds on the assumption that we are too ignorant by far to know exactly what is good for us. How often are we mistaken as to what is really conducive to our best interest: hence we often "ask and receive not, because we ask amiss." Why, if God granted all we wish, the probability is, that we should be ruined rather than relieved. But God seeth not as man seeth.

You are a poor man now, and perhaps you desire to be rich; you think what a good thing it must be to be wealthy. But riches are not needful; you may be very happy without them; with Christ in your heart, and heaven in prospect, your poor home may have happiness enough to deck a splendid palace. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Riches are not needful: you can have great happiness apart from them: to you they might be fraught with the greatest danger, and therefore God withholds them. Perhaps you are in trouble; you have come to the house of God this morning with a very heavy, dejected heart; for a grievous trial has overtaken you; you envy your neighbour, who seems so happy; you sigh for deliverance, but deliverance is not needful; the trial is the needful thing for you. Ah! my brother, thy sorrow is a process for an end—the end of thy faith—the salvation of thy soul. Perhaps you are bereaved—the desire of your eyes has been taken away at a stroke—you refuse to be comforted—you look up to God, and say, "Thou destroyest the hope of man." Well, it is good for you to be thus afflicted; and though you see not, perhaps, at present, the bright light that is in the cloud, yet, be assured, there is mercy in it all. It is a trial "needful for you." You cannot expect that the road will be always smooth—that the sky will be always bright. If you do, you will be grievously disappointed. The roses and carnations are only for the summer months—what folly to be expecting them all the year round. Why should you expect to be always exempt from trouble, when God has never promised it? "All you need." Ah! all that you need, that the great Father will bestow; but remember, he must be the Judge—not you. It is his prerogative to know what is best for you, and therefore you should say as you sometimes sing,

"Not what we wish, but what we want,
Oh! let thy grace supply;
The good, unasked, in mercy grant,
The ill, though asked, deny."

All that you need, God will give. Things may be desirable—very desirable,

but not needful; and, recollect, it is only the "needful things" which God has promised, and here he will never fail. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

The next term which we propose to examine, relates not to the restriction, not to the limitation of this promise, but to the fulness, to the sufficiency of it. "My God shall supply *all* your need." What can you want more than that? "All your need." Here there is no restriction, no limitation whatever. All we need to keep us humble in prosperity; all we need to keep us patient in adversity; all we need to make us valiant in the fight of faith; all we need to make us run with patience the race set before us in the gospel; all we need to sustain us in the hour of temptation and trial; all we need for life and for death; for things present and things to come; in every case his grace will be sufficient. He will be a present help, a very present help in every time of need.

And mark the *certainty* of it. It is no idle dream; no illusion; no mere vision, but a fact. We have it on the word of the eternal, on the promise of the infallible, God—"My God shall supply." Satan may insinuate, infidelity may cavil, but "we know in whom we have believed." "He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent." "My God shall supply all your need."

The next term which we propose to examine, and which demands our attention, relates to the standard according to which this supply will be regulated. "My God shall supply all your need"—according to what? "according to his riches in glory." Yes! only think of that! he will regulate his munificence by the extent of his own inexhaustible fulness. The measure of supply will be proportionate; commensurate with the infinitude of his ability, and the inexhaustible sufficiency of his boundless, unending resources. He will regulate his bestowment, not by our desert; not by our poor, feeble, worthless services, but "according to his riches in glory;" his own transcendent majesty; his own immaculate purity; his own matchless power; his own transcendent excellence and love; he will give according to nothing less than that. "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory." There is a world of meaning here which we try in vain to comprehend; the study of eternity will be insufficient to explore it, insufficient to exhaust it. What! supply according to *his* riches—the riches of him who scattered the stars through the firmament with a word—who rules all mind and all matter—by whom kings reign and princes decree justice? The riches of Him, before whom all the intelligences in the whole range of the universe are only as grasshoppers—supply according to his riches? The riches of Him, who had only to speak and it was done?—by whom all things were made, and without whom not any thing made that is made?—supply according to his riches, and according to his riches in glory? that glory which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived?" that glory, the full extent of which the highest Archangel, the very first-born sons of light in vain attempt to comprehend?" Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the goodness of God! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Yes, he will give on the scale of greatness, on the scale of grandeur, worthy of the throne on which he sits; commensurate with the ineffable dignity of his nature, the boundless beneficence of his rule. This is like him; this is how he always acts. He never bestows his gifts with a niggardly or grudging hand. His supplies are always ample; never insufficient, never scanty, never inadequate; there is a fulness in them enough for every want, enough for every woe. "He is rich in mercy, plenteous in redemption;" "Able to save to the uttermost;" "The blood of his Son cleanseth from all sins." The heaven he will give us at last will be a fulness of joy, an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He exceeds and excels our expectations; he gives us above all that we can ask or think; he is never impoverished, never tired of giving. No; he even invites us to ask and receive; he is even more ready to bestow than we are to solicit; he even condescends,

even seeks to convince us of his ability and willingness, by arguing the case with us—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him." Oh! my brother, despair not; thou art very insignificant, very undeserving, very unworthy, very poor and feeble in his sight, but he will supply thy necessities, not according to thy unworthiness, but according to his own mercy; not according to thy insignificance, but according to his own boundless majesty; not according to thy weakness, but according to his own omnipotence; not according to thy poverty, but according to his own matchless riches. What can you want more than this? "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory."

The last term employed in the text relates to the medium by which this supply is secured—"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Whatever we derive, we derive from Christ. It is all the consequence of his sacrifice; the result of his atoning death; the glorious produce of his mediatorial work. God out of Christ would be, not our Friend, but our Foe; not a bountiful Donor, but a terrible Avenger; not a benevolent Father, but a frowning Judge; a Consuming Fire, to wither and ruin before the fury of his anger. But "he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?" If he would bestow the greater, how can he deny the lesser? If his wrath be appeased, his justice satisfied, his holiness vindicated, his law made honourable, the equity of his government, and the righteousness of his rule universally established, then what is to hinder his beneficence and mercy? "Christ hath once suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." God is reconciled in Christ; now he can be just, and yet justify the ungodly; he can bestow his bounty, and yet maintain his dignity; he can impart his gifts, and yet maintain his rectitude; he can enrich us with his favours, and yet retain his holiness and honour; and all this results, flows out, and springs up from the mediation of his Son—from the one offering by which he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. It is not of merit, but of grace. We are thus brought nigh by the blood of Christ. He has opened the Father's hand and the Father's heart for us. We are crowned by his grace, healed by his wounds, honoured by his debasement, enriched by his poverty; of him, by him, and through him we derive it all. It was he who began it, he who wrought it, he who completed it. The hand that was nailed to the cross has opened the storehouse of heaven, brought forth the treasure of infinitude, made manifest the exceeding riches of the Godhead, held out the riches, glory, and benevolence, the fulness and tenderness of infinite mercy and love. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

My dear hearers! are you the heirs of this promise? Do you think this morning that you can lift up to heaven an unpresumptuous eye, and say, "My God?" Can you say by faith in Christ Jesus, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" This promise is not for the indifferent, not for the impenitent, not for the unbelieving, it is only for the pardoned, only for the sanctified, only for them that "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." God may supply your temporal necessities, spread your table, prosper your business, give success to your plans, but if you are estranged from his fellowship, neglecting his overtures, and despising the riches of his goodness; all this is rather an aggravation of your guilt than a token of his favour. And oh! what can be more ungrateful than to live upon his bounty, and yet decline his service? to be fed by his hand, and yet disown his goodness? to be enriched by his favour, and yet take no pleasure in his ways? How could you wonder if he should visit your transgressions with a rod, and your iniquities with stripes? Is his patience to have no end? Is his forbearance to have no limit? Despisest thou the riches of his goodness? There is no crime so fearful, no guilt so

black. What ! cannot God conquer you by love ? cannot God melt you by tenderness ? will nothing but poverty bring you to your senses ? will nothing but penury and want turn your feet to God and Christ ? In your wealth there is destitution ; in your honour there is infamy ; in your credit there is disgrace unless your heart be renewed and sanctified by grace. What are the riches of earth to the unsearchable riches of Christ ? " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

And let the sons of God take courage. How can you want with such a Friend ? " Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin ; but I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothed the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much rather clothe you, oh ye of little faith ?" Let there be no mistrustfulness, no wavering, no despondency. Remember what a God you have—a God who has all power both in heaven and on earth ; who has all the resources of nature, and providence, and grace at his absolute disposal ; who drops the crumbs for the sparrow ; feedeth the hungry lion of the forest ; counts the throbbings of the infant's heart ; guides the destinies of empires ; sustains and upholds the universe—upholdeth all things by the word of his power.—

" This, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend ;
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end."

There is no uncertainty about it ; He is faithful who promises. He has never broken his word ; all his words are " Yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Then let us repose on his goodness ; let us rely on his fidelity. If we cannot unriddle, let us learn to trust ; if we cannot understand, let us learn to adore. " Why take ye thought for to-morrow ?" " As thy day is so thy strength shall be." Doubt not ; be confident of this very thing, " My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

And let us learn from all this to make the generosity of God the pattern of our own ; as we have received so let us give ; as God has given to us so let us give back to him ; and let us give as he gives, not grudgingly, but cheerfully, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Not sparingly, but liberally, as God has prospered us ; let our gifts be regulated by the bounteousness of his bestowments, by the munificence of his gifts.

Persons sometimes say, " We are always giving." To be sure you are, and you are always receiving. Does not God spread your table day by day ? Does not God give you food and raiment, and all things richly to enjoy ? Always giving ! Of course you are, and ought to do so when you are always receiving from God. Be not like those who are always receiving and never returning. To use the beautiful language of an old Divine, " As the sea receives the rivers, and then doth not hold them fast, but sends back the waters in exhalations to the skies, and as the skies, when they get them, do not turn misers, and hoard them up in bags, but send them down in fruitful showers to refresh, and fructify, and fertilize the earth, so receiving ourselves to do good and communicate, let us not forget." Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

DAVID'S DISTRESS, AND HAPPY DELIVERANCE.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL WALKER,

AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, RYE FORD, (NEAR ROSS,) HEREFORDSHIRE,
NOVEMBER 23, 1851,

[M.S. supplied by the Minister gratuitously.]

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."—PSALM xl. 1—3.

AMID all the changes of which our earth has been the scene; amid the rise and fall of empires, the revolutions of the mightiest kingdoms, the ever-varying opinions of men, and the endless modifications of human systems of morality and religion, the religion of the Bible has remained *unchangeable*: it has retained upon it the indelible stamp of *immutability*; and by this grand characteristic, and by this remarkable signature, we recognise the distinguishing feature of the character of Him who is its glorious Author. True religion is the same now as it ever was, and such it will remain, in its essential principles, to the end of time. Its nature is unalterable; its doctrines are the same; its duties are the same; its promises are the same; its threatenings are the same; and its experience is the same; at least, in all its general and essential characteristics. We admit, that God, in bringing sinners to himself, operates in a variety of ways; and therefore, conversions may be somewhat diversified in their character; but though there may be some points of dissimilarity, yet in their chief features, they have always been, and ever will be, precisely the same. The mind must in *all* cases be enlightened by the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, so that there may be an appalling and alarming discovery of the greatness of inward corruption. All who will be saved must feel that they are lost, and that they are *helpless*; that such is their impotence that *self-salvation* is a thing utterly impossible. And there must be in every instance of genuine conversion to God, the confidence of faith in the willingness and all-sufficiency of the Redeemer to effect his emancipation from the ascendancy and dominion of sin; and there must be earnest and persevering prayer for mercy. The experience to be felt is the same, in every nation of the earth, and in every epoch of time. Hence it is said, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." If we consult the experience of patriarchs and prophets, we shall find a striking resemblance to that of the apostles, and that of believers in all subsequent ages of the church. If we cross the mighty seas, and listen to a narration of religious experience from some of India's sons who have recently been recovered from dark heathenism, we shall find that it strikingly accords with that of David, the King of Israel. And where is it possible to find one of God's people, who cannot adopt, as appropriate to his own case, what the psalmist has recorded in the striking and impressive passage brought before us on the present occasion? "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my

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goings. And he hath put a new song, in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

In these verses we have, First, the psalmist's great distress and trouble. He was plunged into a horrible pit of miry clay from which he could not extricate himself, but sank deeper and deeper. As he does not here complain of sickness, bodily distress, or the assaults of his enemies, we may conclude that the cause of his grief was some inward trouble and perplexity of mind.

Secondly, we have his conduct in his distress and trouble of mind. He waited humbly and patiently for God; he expected relief from the Lord alone. He knew that no other could deliver him. O! what a happy thing it is both to hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of God. There is in him a fulness of all good; strength for the weak, grace for the unworthy, righteousness for the unrighteous, and complete deliverance from all trouble. This David knew, and therefore he waited patiently for the Lord.

Thirdly, we have his experience of God's goodness, and the kind and gracious answer he received to his prayers. "He heard my cry." This he records for the honour of God; to shew that he is a God hearing prayer; and that however long he may sometimes delay his answer, he will not suffer his saints to call upon him in vain—"He never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." And to all his people he says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

He also recorded it for his own and others encouragement. God *had* delivered, and therefore he *would* deliver; God had answered his prayer, dispersed the dark cloud with which he was enveloped; scattered his gloomy fears; calmed the tumult of his spirit; smoothed the perturbations of his breast; and given him peace of conscience, brought him out of his state of despondency, and shone upon his soul with the bright and glorious beamings of his countenance, assuring him of his favour, which is life, and of his loving-kindness, which is better than life, and filled him with the most exalted joy and felicity—"He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." This, dear brethren, appears to be the meaning of our text. It has, as you perceive, a peculiar reference to David, king of Israel; but it may be profitably and legitimately considered in a more extended application. It may be applied to all God's spiritual Israel, who were once as sinners in a horrible pit, but out of which they have been rescued by the outstretched arm of Omnipotent grace.

Praying for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without whose aid no spiritual blessing can be realized, we propose to consider, First, the distressing situation described. Secondly, the merciful deliverance effected. Thirdly, the interesting result declared.

Let us consider, First, the distressing situation described. The imagery by which the Psalmist depicts a state of spiritual distress, occasioned by sin, is very striking and just. Here we have the affecting condition of every fallen sinner, drawn by the pencil of inspiration; it is indeed a very gloomy, but a very truthful and graphic description; and it is not at all *overdrawn* or exaggerated. Let us examine it carefully, and see whether observation and experience will not prove it to be a correct delineation.

An unhappy person, who is either fallen by accident, or violently thrown into a horrible pit, a deep sounding pit, with his feet stuck fast in the miry clay, is the simile under which we have represented to us man's state by nature.

Sin has involved mankind in a condition of fearful and alarming apostacy from God, the source of all excellence, and the fountain of all happiness. Our first parents stood high in the favour of heaven; they were crowned with glory and honour; they stood upon a lofty eminence of holiness and happiness; they were radiant with the image of their Maker, and privileged with the most intimate and delightful fellowship with him. But alas! their innocence and their blessedness was soon lost! Sin speedily introduced into their minds spiritual darkness and alienation. Despoiled of the image of their Maker, and robbed of peace and hope, and under the withering influence of the tremendous transgression they had perpetrated, they fled from the presence of the Lord,

and vainly sought to conceal their guilty heads amongst the trees of the Garden of Eden. And now the melancholy fact is proclaimed by the word of God, and confirmed by daily experience, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It must be said of all of us, without exception, that in our unrenewed state we are deeply sunk in transgression, prompted by the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; we have assumed the attitude of hostility against the God that made us, and that has an indisputable claim to our most perfect, sincere, and constant obedience and love. We have wilfully and perversely rebelled against him, and practically declared that we would not have him to reign over us, but that if it were within our power we would pull him from his throne, and banish him from his own world; and, alas! we have been but too successful in dethroning him from the supremacy of our hearts, and in placing an idol on the seat which he ought exclusively to occupy. Well may it be said by one of God's inspired servants, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him, neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his ways." We are deeply sunk in condemnation by our fearful transgressions; we have brought ourselves under the curse of the broken law, and stand liable to the exaction of the unmitigated penalty, which is eternal death. It is written, "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" "the wages of sin is death;" and again it is written, and O! that the power of conviction might accompany the tremendous words to every impenitent sinner's heart, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

The simile employed in the text reminds us, in the next place, of a state of *darkness*. The allusion appears to be to a dark subterraneous cavern. And, oh, my brethren, what a horrible pit of darkness is that into which sinners by nature are plunged! Whatever of intellectual light and knowledge may have been possessed by some of the sons of men—however extensive their scientific or philosophical attainments, they have been groping in midnight darkness so far as the great things of God, the soul, and immortality are concerned. In reference to the most enlightened sages and philosophers of antiquity, it may be affirmed, that, at best, their light has been but exceedingly feeble and flickering. What have they known of the character and perfections of the Most High? What have they understood of God's redemptive economy, or of a future state of rewards and punishments? "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people." Verily "life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel;" "the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give us light, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." Neither the light of reason, nor of science, was sufficient for the guidance of man through a world of sorrows to the beaming splendours and the everlasting blessedness of the world beyond the tomb. And before the dark mind of man can be sufficiently illuminated, that august Being who commanded the light to shine out of darkness must shine into his mind to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, speaking of our state by nature, says, "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." He also declares that "the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not." Sinners, like men in darkness, know not whither they walk; they see not their danger; they perceive not the excellence of Christ, the evil nature of sin, the vanity of the world, the beauty of religion, the privileges of christians, the awfulness of death to the unprepared, and the terrible realities of judgment and hell. Oh! what a horrible thing it is to have the eyes of the mind blinded by sin and satan! How thoughtlessly, how recklessly, how securely do such (if grace prevent not) rush into the regions of destruction and misery—misery that will be unrelieved with one passing ray of hope. The state of such is strikingly represented by a man fallen into a horrible pit, or thrown into a dungeon.

We are reminded, in the next place, of a condition of *defilement*. Some persons deny the doctrine of original sin, and of human depravity; but such

persons place themselves in direct antagonism to the plainest averments of the sacred Scriptures, as well as the most undeniable facts, which may be gathered from every part of the globe, and from every age of human history. "What saith the Scriptures." How much more abominable and filthy is man, "who drinketh iniquity like water." "We are all as unclean things, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "Out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, murders; and these are they which defile a man." "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked—who can know it?" Who can fathom the depths of sin? What was the symbolical design and intention of the numerous ablutions practised under the Levitical economy? Was there not in the washing away of ceremonial defilement, a figurative allusion to the cleansing away of moral impurity?

Spiritual defilement is also described by a man clothed in filthy garments, to whom reference is made in one of the prophets. Sin is also represented by the leprosy, and the plague. Now, as these are peculiarly loathsome, and render the unhappy persons who are subjected to them unfit for the society of their fellow men; even so are sinners an abomination to the Lord, and unfit for the society of the blessed in heaven. No unclean thing shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven; for it is written in the word of eternal truth, "And there shall in no wise enter into it (that is the New Jerusalem) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of life." The "miry clay" of sin defiling all the faculties of the sinner's mind, render the understanding, will, and affections corrupt, and causing them to yield the members of their bodies as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, they are as an unclean thing, and therefore unfit for heaven. The priest under the Levitical economy, pronounced the leper unclean; and then he was excluded from the camp. This was a typical exclusion, teaching a moral exclusion from that moral and spiritual economy which it shadowed forth. The same disqualification is pointed out by the ancient prophets; Isaiah says, "It shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." And again, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O, Jerusalem, the holy city—for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." An eloquent living divine has said when speaking of sin as disqualifying for admission into the New Jerusalem, "In the first place, sin is the seed of all the misery that exists in hell. Hell is but that monosyllable—sin, repeated, echoed, reverberated for ever. Sin is the seed that produces all the misery—is the germ of all the agony and woe of those whose doom is among the region of the lost; and to retain that germ which necessarily extinguishes happiness in the bosom, is thereby necessarily to be disqualified for that better, holier, and happier state, where happy hearts only will beat, and holy hearts only live. Sinners must be disqualified, in the next place, because they are unfit for the joys, the songs, and sympathies of those who dwell in the New Jerusalem. The man whose partialities are all depraved, whose feelings and affections are all of the earth, earthy, cannot sympathise with pure thoughts, or take part in the holy choir, or unite in the anthem peal, that rises from the company of the saints of God and the Lamb, who sits upon the throne. How shall the idolator, the abominable, the sorcerer, and depraved, join in that beautiful hymn, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?' How shall they whose hearts are all discord, and incapable of any perception or appreciation of holy harmony, say, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?' The man who is unholy cannot join in this song; such songs must be grating to his ear; they must only awaken agony in his heart. The moral character of such persons must be a moral disqualification, and thus unfit its subjects for singing the new song, or holding communion with the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem."

We proceed briefly to remark that the representation in the text reminds us

of *imminent danger*. While we remain in this horrible pit we are not only in a state of defilement that disqualifies us for heaven, but we are continually exposed to destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Death eternal is justly threatened by a holy God; and the doom of sinners is certain if they remain in the situation here described; and the earnest of their fearful inheritance they already possess. In John iii. 18, it is said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." And again, verse 36, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Lastly we observe that the statement in the text reminds us of *helplessness*. As a man is helpless, and must perish in a deep and horrible pit without assistance, even so must sinners perish in all their guilt and wretchedness if divine help is not extended to them. A sinner cannot deliver himself from sin, misery, and wrath any more than an unhappy man who is fallen into a deep and horrible pit. The allusion is to a man who is sunk into a pit so deep that the top of it is above his reach, and besides, the clay so confines his feet that he cannot climb; consequently, if help come to him it must come from above; and he cannot expect deliverance unless he obtains it by earnest cries. So it is with perishing sinners. Salvation is above the reach of human efforts; our help can come only from heaven, and we must not expect deliverance unless we cry for it. This is all that we can do, and this is what we *must* do.

We have now, dear brethren, set before you the woeful condition of man, by nature, as a fallen state, as a state of defilement, as a state of imminent danger, and as a state of helplessness; and may we not ask, is not this description a true one? We make our appeal to those who know what it is to be shut up under a sense of guilt and apprehension of God's wrath—we ask such persons whether any words can adequately describe the darkness, the misery, the bondage of a soul so circumstanced? The state of Jeremiah, when cast into a dungeon, and sinking into the mire, and ready to perish with hunger, was distressing to flesh and blood; but what was it to a sinner shut up in hourly expectation of the wrath of an offended God? No one can tell how the soul trembles, and sinks, and faints, under such appalling apprehensions as those to which the apostle alludes, when he speaks of a certain "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." But such are the feelings which must be experienced by all who are brought to God. May the Divine Spirit, the Enlightener, give those who are now present and remain in a state of impenitence, a perception of their spiritual condition, that they may feel the paramount importance of seeking salvation!

Let us proceed to consider, Secondly, the deliverance effected. The deliverance was connected with *prayer*. "I waited patiently for the Lord." We must cry for pity, help, and deliverance. Thus the saints, in past ages, have done. Joseph prayed to the Lord when his brethren cast him into a horrible pit, and the Lord caused him to be rescued from his perilous situation; he prayed to the Lord in prison, and the Lord heard him. Job, in distress, when friendless and helpless, cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard him. The Israelites cried to the Lord in their troubles, and the Lord delivered them out of all their distresses. Jonah prayed from the deep, while imprisoned in the whale; and his prayer was heard and answered. David waited patiently for the Lord, he betook himself to prayer; and where should a weary and heavy laden sinner go, but to his God? Being exposed to destruction, the Most High alone can grant unto him saving mercy; being defiled, he alone can communicate purifying influences; being deeply fallen, he alone can favour him with *restoring* grace. It is from the Lord alone that salvation cometh; we must look unto him and be saved; we must make a penitent believing application to him, and repose all our dependence upon him, and the many precious promises he has graciously vouchsafed for our encouragement. David tells us in what manner

he prayed; Psalm cxxx. 1—6; "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord! Lord hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his Word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Patient waiting implies, humble consciousness and acknowledgment of our *demerit* and entire acquiescence in God's plan of salvation. We must be perfectly willing for him to dispense his mercy in his own way. To wait patiently, implies persevering earnestness and solicitude until the object be obtained. The psalmist persevered, because he knew how often he had turned a deaf ear to his God, and he hoped in the multitude of his tender mercies. However long God withheld an answer of peace, he would wait without murmuring; and abundantly satisfied, if after all his patient waiting, he might hear him in accents of love, saying, "Fear not; thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." He continued *instant* in prayer; with penitential cries and tears he continued to seek mercy; though, for a time, there appeared no indication of approaching salvation. The heavens appeared impenetrable as brass; yet he persisted in crying, like the importunate widow; he believed that God would, in his tender mercy hear him; he pleaded the all-sufficient merit of the great propitiation for sin; and trusted that through it, he should ultimately find acceptance with God.

This deliverance was *complete* and *glorious*. He obtained the desire of his heart, for the Lord "inclined to him, and heard his cry." This expression must be understood figuratively. It denotes the great condescension of the Most High, and his readiness to regard the prayer of the true penitent. "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble Spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." With what solicitude does the mother incline her ear to the cry of distress, when it proceeds from the child she tenderly loves—"And as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you in Jerusalem." And "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." How melting the compassion of our heavenly Father, as depicted in the delightful and cheering passage in Jeremiah xxxi. 18, 20—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son?—Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." When the sorrowful heart gives utterance to its cry, or breathes its deep, but scarcely audible sigh, it ascends to the throne of God, and is heard "high in the climes of bliss," where the Most High sitteth amidst the splendour of heaven, and the symphonies of angels. And he not only hears, but sends relief. The golden chain of mercy is extended to those who are imprisoned in the horrible pit, and in answer to their supplications they receive liberty, purity, stability, and joy.

The Psalmist was, so to speak, imprisoned in a dungeon, from which there was no possibility of emerging by his own unaided efforts; but from this he was rescued by the hand of mercy, and thus he was amply rewarded for all his patient waiting. Had this supplication been unintermitted for thousands of years, they would have been well compensated by such an answer as this at last; and if a promise of such an answer were given to any who are gone beyond the possibility of redemption, we may well conceive with what ardour he would commence and prosecute his labours through the appointed time; the very hope of deliverance at last would more than half annihilate the anguish with which despair already overwhelmed his soul.

The deliverance described in the text, is one from a state of defilement to a condition of *purity*—David not only obtained pardon, but holiness. Those whom God

predestinates, he calls; and whom he calls, he justifies; and whom he justifies, he sanctifies and glorifies.

"There is a Fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Emanuel's veins;	And sinners plung'd beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains."
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"The blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin."

Stability is another blessing which God bestows on those whom he rescues by his Almighty grace from the horrible pit and miry clay. The Psalmist speaks of his feet being set upon a Rock, and his goings being established. What that Rock was we are at no loss to determine—it was the "Rock of ages,"—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the sure Foundation to all who stand upon him, and to whom he will impart of his own stability. He is in Scripture frequently thus designated, "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel thus spake to me." David said, "To thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock." Isaiah speaks of him as "a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence;" and again he says, "A man shall be for an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." As a Rock, Christ is the Foundation of a sinner's salvation; and as they who build on a rock build on a secure basis, they who build on Christ shall never be confounded; they shall never be covered with confusion in consequence of the disappointment of their hopes. Christ is the Foundation of our acceptance with God, of our justification and of our sanctification, of our faith, our love, our peace, and joy: all who are established on him are perfectly safe. Thus the prophet Isaiah, when speaking of the true believer says, "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks." Rocks in ancient times were places of defence; Palestine abounded with them, and these constituted its strength in the time of danger. Its inhabitants retired to them, where they found sure refuge against the sudden approach of the enemy; and all who are in Christ, the Rock of ages, are safely garrisoned, and "no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper." United with Christ, they are strong to walk in the ways of God; separated from him, they can do nothing, united to him, they can do all things. Their hearts are established with grace, and they can hurl defiance at all the powers of darkness, and already by anticipation enjoy their final triumph.

Lastly, the glorious deliverance celebrated in our text is connected with joy—"a new song." Great mercies call for loud praises. The mercies of God are infinite, and therefore deserve infinite praise; praise is a new song to the newly converted; the sinner's heart is not attuned to the song of praise; if, at times, he feels some measure of grateful emotion for temporal mercies, he cannot render cordial thanks for spiritual mercies, because he has not received them, nor felt his need of them; and until we are sensible of what a horrible pit we have been taken from, we cannot have our mouths filled with praise and thanksgiving to our redeeming God: ardent love to God and holy delight in him invariably springs out of a manifestation of his grace to the soul. This song is "new," because it consists of *new matter*. The soul that is brought out of this horrible pit, is constrained to sing of mercy, pardon, and redemption—strains to which it has been unaccustomed. This is "a new song," because sung by a *new creature*—by one who has just been brought into a *new world*. It will ever be a new song; it will never grow old. There will be a freshness in it, through all eternity; and as the redeemed soul can never sufficiently praise God, he will never be tired of singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

What christian heart does not now beat in unison with the language of one of our hymns?—

"When all thy mercies, oh my God, My rising soul surveys, And what believer is not prepared to say, I'll praise my Maker while he lends me breath; And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers:	Transported with the view I'm lost In wonder, love, and praise." My days of praise shall ne'er be past, While life, and thought, and being last, Or immortality endures."
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We have but time to glance at the last particular proposed for consideration, namely, The interesting result declared, "Many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord."

The apostle Paul tells us that the mercy vouchsafed to him was intended by God for the instruction and encouragement of others—"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting;" and thus in the text David says, "Many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord," From his experience, then, we may learn,

First. To use the same means. We are not to say that he found mercy; and so may we while we are neglecting to have recourse to the same means. We can only expect the same success by the use of the same means. The means generally blessed to this end are the reading of the Scriptures, the preaching of the word, and prayer. The Eunuch was reading a passage out of Isaiah when the Lord

revealed his salvation to him; three thousand were listening to the preaching of Peter when they were converted; Cornelius was praying in his house when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and bid him send for Peter, who was to preach to him the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly. In the use of the same means we should expect the same blessing. We should never imagine ourselves to be in such a low state but that God is able to deliver us from it. The condition of David was as desperate as it well could be, yet he was rescued out of it to his unutterable joy. Hezekiah seems also to have been in a similar state, (Isaiah xxxviii. 17.) "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption for thou hast cast all my sin behind thy back." If from a conviction of your great sinfulness you sigh and mourn in deep penitence before God, you shall most assuredly receive the "oil of joy for mourning, beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," for He who is emphatically, "*the truth*" has declared "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

In concluding this subject, we remark first, what a tremendous evil is sin. It is sin that has inundated our world with a deluge of evils, which has converted the garden of God into an Aeldama, a field of blood. It is sin which has degraded our race from the elevated station it once held, which has effaced the splendid image of God, and exposed us to eternal indignation. It is sin which has dug the abyss of despair, and kindled the flames of the world of torments. Look around you in the world, behold the infinitely varied afflictions of body and mind, "that man is heir to;" collect in one mighty mass all the groans that have been uttered; all the tears that have been shed, all the anguish that has been felt from the fall of Adam to the present time; unveil the depths of the human heart and consider what loathsome spectacles it has presented to a holy God; think of the joys of immortality that are lost, and the gulf of misery into which sinners are plunged. Descend in imagination to the abode of the accursed, and behold there "the fire that never will be quenched," and listen to the thunders of divine indignation which burst upon these devoted men, and then say to yourself all this, and inconceivably more than this, is the effect of sin; and will any of you still love that thrice horrible thing? Will you not rather pray that you may be delivered from it through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit? Will you not from the depths of sin and misery look to him with faith and love who came to destroy the works of the devil?

Secondly, how unspeakably great is God's mercy! This will appear, if we consider from what he delivers us, from the pollutions of sin, and from its penal consequences. How he delivers—by the gift of his Son; his incarnation, his life of poverty and humiliation, his sufferings in the garden, his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to glory. Again, if we consider the benefits secured, these are liberty from the bondage of corruption, purity of heart, and everlasting joy, for "the ransomed of the Lord shall return unto Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Thirdly, how justly may the whole glory of our salvation be ascribed to God! boasting is excluded. By what law, of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. All the spiritual Israel with one voice exclaim, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give we praise."

"Grace first contrived the way,
To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan,"
"Grace taught my wandering feet,
To tread the heavenly road,

And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.
"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days,
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

Lastly, how great the safety and happiness of all who are built on Christ. Those individuals who have their feet placed on the rock of the divine promises, and have an interest in the plan of grace revealed in the gospel, must be secure. Whatever may be the perplexities and discouragements of Christians, they rest upon a foundation that shall stand for ever. The people of God have in all ages had to pass through numerous and severe trials, but though the church has often been persecuted and opposed, and though it has been like a spark in the water, it has never been extinguished, and though like a drop of water in the fire, it has never been dried up. What said the Saviour, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS, THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE
OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. THOMAS E. THORESBY,

AT SPA FIELDS CHAPEL, SUNDAY EVENING,
DECEMBER 7, 1851.

"We preach Christ crucified."—1 Cor. i. 23.

"It has pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching,"—not by foolish preaching, but "by the foolishness of preaching,"—"to save them that believe." But then it all depends upon what the preaching is. God has not only ordained preaching as the means of salvation, but he has appointed the subject. That subject, say you is Christ, Not that merely. If you were to preach Christ as the "Word with God;" as the "Word God," "by whom all things were made and without whom nothing was made that is made;" if you were to preach that it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" preach Christ as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, as the great Teacher sent from God; preach his miracles; preach his benevolence; all would not do. It is not only Christ, but Christ *crucified*! There is the stress and the power of the apostolic ministry.

We preach Christ crucified as the distinctive feature of the apostolic ministry. There was a ministry of God's priests on earth once—there is none now. That ministry of priests was typical of Christ's sufferings and crucifixion. The sacrifices that were offered in the presence of the Jewish nation, aye, and long before the Jewish nation had an existence, for sacrifices of blood, were not peculiar to that nation. Abel offered unto God sacrifices typical of Christ's suffering. The sacrifices of the Jewish people, and the sacrifices which were offered before, all pointed to the Lamb of God. Rightly understood they said just what the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

There was a ministry of prophets; prophets to teach, whilst the priests were offering sacrifices. And this ministry of prophets was *predictive* of Christ's suffering; for they "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And then there was Christ's ministry—that was *declara-*

time of his crucifixion; "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," said Christ himself, "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And Christ said, with a significancy of import that is inexhaustible, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." And the apostolical ministry *proclaimed* Christ's crucifixion: and in that ministry we find it attested as a fact, "Him being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." It was not only attested as a fact—it was expounded as a mystery, though of course not fully. Its meaning which was in the depths of the Divine mind, was in the apostolic ministry, under the plenitude of the grace of the Holy Spirit, who delighted to testify of Christ brought forth and exhibited to the world. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," &c. And then the apostles testify salvation in his name. And the crucifixion of Jesus was also that which in the apostolic ministry they suffered for, as their chief glory; it was the cause of the trial, persecution and contempt which the world cast upon Jesus, and his apostles. But this very cross was that which the apostles took and held up before the world—not the crucifix—and then exclaimed, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" it was that which they held dearer to them than all beside. It was then *the distinctive feature of the apostolic ministry*: and that ministry is not apostolical which is without the cross as the chief subject of its proclamation, as its strength and its glory.

Not only as the distinctive feature of the apostolic ministry, but, *we preach Christ crucified, notwithstanding the opposition of men*. To the Jews it was a stumblingblock; and so it has been since to all men of like principles; to all those men who seek their salvation in ritual observances; we care not whether they be the rites which distinguish Judaism, or the rites which are characteristic of Christianity; they who place their dependance for salvation upon these ritual observances, of course must object to the preaching of Christ crucified as the means of salvation. And not only these men, but if you will find others as they could easily be found in the days of the apostles, and as easily now; if you will find others who pour contempt upon ritual observances, yet place their dependance for salvation upon *preceptive morality*; mark the word I use! I am not speaking now of the men who consider the whole precepts of the gospel as binding upon them, and the men who delight to keep them from love to Christ, because Christ has saved them, and who glory in their observance. I speak not of these men, but of those who take the precept as a part of the law of works, and who vainly imagine that with God's mercy, and their striving after sincere obedience to the precept, that they shall, by means of both, work out their salvation. Now, to all such men, the doctrine of the cross, as expounded by the apostles, is a stumbling block, and therefore they oppose it. But not merely these; a second class pour contempt upon it, as did the Greeks of old—"To the Jews it was a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." The Greeks pour contempt upon this doctrine of the cross—Christ crucified, because of their philosophy; and it is remarkable how all those

who have opposed the cross of Christ through all ages, are the same in the essential elements of their philosophy. We have the *modern* Greeks who pour contempt upon this doctrine, and who do so because of their philosophy. I hesitate not to say, in this department—that is, the department of moral philosophy, it will be found that their philosophy of God, their philosophy of man, and their philosophy of things, is a philosophy falsely so called. Each one of these sources furnishes, as it is supposed by those who believe in the philosophy, a reason for pouring contempt upon the cross of Christ. If they speak of the philosophy of God, they will tell us that the cross—Christ crucified—the doctrine of the cross, is inconsistent with that philosophy. If they speak of the philosophy of man, they tell us that the crucifixion of Christ is unnecessary. And if they go to the things themselves, then they tell us that the doctrine of Christ crucified, is contradictory in itself.

Now let us observe, then, for a few moments, the philosophy of God. They try to spell out the characters which they think inform them of the divine nature, and they say, What need is there of Christ crucified? the divine character needs no propitiation. But philosophy itself will teach them, as well as fact, in their own experience, and the experience of the world, that this is only a partial view of the divine character. It is true, God is benevolent; it is true, that God is merciful; but, we ask, is that all that is true of God? If you would learn the divine character, you must go to the Word—aye, and above all, to this despised cross of Christ; it is there you will find the brightest revelation of the divine character. “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

And then as to the philosophy of man. They tell us that it is unnecessary; they tell us that man is a law unto himself. They first of all take away a great part of the divine character, and then they set forth man as quite in a state in which he does not need any law but what he can find written upon his own existence—does not want any foreign assistance—any divine help—he has life within himself. And so this philosophy tells us that man has but to consult his own feelings, and then he will have the moral law; and he has only to exert his own strength, and he can keep it; that is to say, he can give perfect manifestation of these moral feelings in accordance with the will of God, so as to obtain the divine favour, and therefore it is said that it is unnecessary. I need not say that the best men have proved this to be untrue. The best men, so far from believing their own feelings to be a sufficient law, and their own strength a sufficient help, are ready to exclaim with one who was by no means an unenlightened man, “Oh, wretched man that I am.” We see men who may be taken as a model, in the lowliness of prayer, asking for divine help, and obtaining this as the reply, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” So far from finding their moral feelings a sufficient guide and their native strength sufficient help, it has been just the contrary. The best of men have felt this the most deeply; the best of men have prayed for divine help the most fervently.

Why according to that we should have just this contradiction:—Here is a man with one state of moral feelings, on the other hand there is a man with a

state of moral feelings just opposed to the other. Now, I ask, which is to furnish us with the law that is to be the guide for all of us? There are some men who think that, by killing others they do God service; there are some men who follow what they believe to be the conscientious convictions of right; they may act in the way that seems right to them, but the end thereof they find to be the way of death. No, my brethren; moral feelings found in man are not the guide of humanity; the native strength of man is not sufficient to take him to the skies; but in the doctrine of Christ crucified, as you will see, this state of men is fully met. The philosophy of man, rightly understood, does not pronounce the doctrine of Christ crucified an unnecessary thing.

And then the philosophy of the things themselves. They tell us if we go to this, then the doctrine of Christ crucified is a self-contradiction. They are very fond of selecting this one thing—how can death produce life? And that is a question which the gospel answers, though their philosophy can furnish no reply. We preach Christ crucified, notwithstanding the opposition of men—men who, like the Jews, find the cross a stumbling-block—men who, like the Greeks, pronounce it to be folly.

In the third and the last place, “we preach Christ crucified” *as the successful means of salvation to sinners*: we preach Christ crucified as the distinctive feature of the apostolic ministry, notwithstanding the opposition of men, as the successful means of man’s salvation; for in Christ crucified you have the grandest exhibition which has ever been seen of God’s love to man. He looks at the cross of Christ, not in the light in which the gospel sets it forth, if he does not see in that cross an exhibition of God’s love. All that God does doubtless is consistent with his love; but sometimes in the divine conduct one attribute takes, if I may so speak, the prominent position; it comes forth, from the divine character supported by all the rest, and is itself the principal actor before the world. Sometimes God’s *justice* is seen by its fearful workings among the children of men, and at other times God’s *wisdom* is seen in perfection shining in its own light like the sun in his mid-day glory; but at other times it is God’s *love*, and in Christ crucified, if we are to understand the words of Jesus aright, we there read expressions of God’s love to man, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;” and that word “gave” is explained by the Saviour afterwards. It means that he was delivered up—delivered to death. You have in that word Jesus *crucified*, “God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In the preaching of Christ crucified we have not only an exhibition of divine love, but we have the *upholding of divine law*. Here is the result:—Man is to be saved; but before man can be saved, man’s transgression must be atoned for. The Saviour comes to make that atonement; the cup is put into his hand to drink, and his prayer is, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me.” But it was not possible; the divine law could not be set aside, justice must exact its utmost penalty, either from the transgressor or from his Substitute. Christ is the substitute of the transgressor: it is therefore from him that justice exacts the penalty, and he must suffer; he must suffer the penalty due

to our sins, and he did suffer that penalty—"he bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

And moreover there is in this the basis which is in accordance with the divine character of your pardon. Pardon could not be extended to sinners in any other way; but take the cross of Christ, let Christ be crucified, and there is the basis for this pardon. Hence Christ himself is called the mercy-seat, the propitiatory. He is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." Not only does Christ crucified afford a satisfactory basis for human pardon, it is the mediation through which the Holy Ghost comes down to the world and dwells among men, and displays his saving power in their experience. It is not only the mediation through which the Holy Ghost comes into the world; it is also the way through which man approaches to God. "I am the way," said Christ, "the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

You have in the cross of Christ, or in Christ crucified, *the compact object of man's faith*. There are some, who tell us faith must be *objective* merely; that is, that it must refer to something out of itself. Then there are others who tell us that faith must be *subjective* merely; that is, that it must depend upon something in the man himself. Now in Christ crucified, we have all that which faith can lay hold of. In this, we have love, in this, we have law, and in this, we have life, that meets the objective character of religion, and the subjective at the same time. That cannot be influential upon man which is not love; that cannot be influential upon man as an intelligent and moral being, if love be there alone, unless law be with it too, and love and law will not meet together the requirements of the case, man must have life through believing.

And now, my brethren, allow me to ask you if the preaching of "Christ crucified" is, or rather Christ crucified, the great subject of apostolic preaching is the object of your faith? In other words, have you so read the gospel, have you so heard the gospel, as to regard this, the crucifixion of Christ, as that which the apostolic ministry was formed to hold forth to the world? What think you, the apostles came to do? Was it merely to testify that Christ wrought miracles? that Christ preached certain doctrines? Or was it not to set forth Christ crucified? Was not this the thing for which the apostolic ministry was called into existence? Was not this the thing which the apostolic ministry did as its chief work; or did it exist for any other purpose whatsoever? Have you any sympathy with those who look upon the cross of Christ as a stumbling block? Is it something that stands in the way of your salvation; coming to the gospel for instruction about salvation? Are you prepared to say, "I would respect the gospel were it not that in the gospel I find that doctrine, Christ crucified?" Well, my hearers, if that is the objection to your receiving the gospel of Christ, you must make up your mind to live and die in the rejection of that gospel. Here is one, the chief apostle making it his boast that he and his brethren preached, not merely Christ, but "Christ crucified." And if you take Christ crucified from the gospel, you leave the gospel without any thing in it that is worthy of the lost, guilty

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS.

sinner. You destroy the distinctive feature of the gospel, by rejecting this the distinctive feature of the apostolic ministry. "No," you say "it is not in the sense you have explained a stumbling block, but after all I do think it is folly." Is that your deliberate opinion of Christ crucified, which is here said to be the "Wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" is it to you an exhibition of folly? By so saying, you identify yourself with the Greeks of old, and stand opposed to Christ's apostles. Do you think the character of God is such, that there was no necessity for the atonement? Do you think your own character is such that there is no necessity for the atonement? Do you think when you come to the atonement which is the incarnation and the suffering of the Son of God, that you find in these sufferings things which contradict each other? Is it so? I wish to impress this upon you; then you stand in no sympathy with Christ or with Christ's apostles. If you had lived in the days of the apostles, you would have opposed their preaching. In other words, you would have rejected Christ's gospel. But I ask you, how is this? It is for this reason, or rather, this can cast some light upon the subject; in association with my text it is affirmed that this doctrine is the "Wisdom of God, and the power of God." If so, it follows that you are without God. Probably, you are really without God's Word. You have the Bible at home; you carry it about with you perhaps; you sometimes enter into a discussion on some of its principle doctrines, but you are without the Bible. The Bible is not to you a revelation of truth which you could not have learned from some other source, it is not to you the sole authority in matters of faith, you are not in reality in possession of the Bible; you do not sit at the feet of divine revelation; you reject it. The reason why you reject Christ crucified, is because you are without God. This doctrine otherwise, would be to you the "Wisdom of God;" it would be to you the "Power of God." But you are without God. In this precise sense you are without God; you have set up some other standard. I ask you this plain question, those of you who are in doubt about the subject, if there were no teachers of philosophy, if there were no men to talk about the insufficiency of the New Testament, if it were put into the hands of a wayfaring man, would they not find Christ crucified in the Bible? Whether they believed the doctrine or not, whether it was a stumbling block to them or not, whether it was folly to them or not, they would certainly find the doctrine; they would recognize it as the chief thing which the apostles proclaimed to the world.

I ask you, Are you prepared to live and die opposed to Christ's apostles? They understood the gospel; they certainly preached the gospel. If you would alter your disposition, you must have more to do with God; not only God's Word, but God's Spirit. You are without God, in the sense that you are not praying to God. Do you say, "I do pray?" Yes; after a sort; but you ought not to call it prayer. You know very well that you have been more earnest about everything else, than you have been in prayer, asking God for his grace. Now, betake yourself afresh to prayer, and in that sense, be no longer without God. And betake yourself afresh to the reading of the Scriptures; or

rather, submission to the Scriptures; that you may understand aright this doctrine—"Christ crucified."

There is something else. The doctrine of Christ crucified has more than anything else to do with *sin*. Now it is remarkable that you, in discussing this doctrine, in enquiring after this doctrine, have not enquired as A *SINNER*; you have lost sight of that altogether. I am bold to affirm that, because I can prove it from the very fact on which you base your argument against the doctrine. I ask you, then, if you have ever in your life wilfully done the devil any harm? You may have spoken against evil; you may have spoken against the Prince of darkness; but you are not conscious, to-night, that you have ever in your life wilfully opposed sin as such. Now this doctrine of Christ crucified can never be understood unless you bring in this element of sin; you are without God in that third sense. Not only without the Word, not only without the Spirit, you are without God in the sense that you never recognise the fearful fact that you have transgressed his holy law—that you have offended his Majesty. This is what you say, "I came into the world with a certain nature; I have been brought up in certain circumstances—circumstances that I could not control; I could not help what you call sin, and therefore I am not to blame." And it is in this way that you justify yourself before God, and will not acknowledge your sinfulness. I do not wonder at your rejecting the crucifixion of Christ as something that is folly. It is the "wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." But what does salvation mean? Salvation implies that you are lost; that is something you have yet to admit. Now if you will not admit that you ought to reject the gospel altogether, because that goes upon the supposition that man is lost: there is no meaning in any part of this gospel, except upon the admission of that serious—that solemn fact.

Now, to those of you who recognise this doctrine as that which the apostles proclaimed, and have no sympathy with those who consider it a "stumbling block," none with those who pour contempt upon it as a "folly," you have only to look to this as that which will give you all the light you require; all the mercy you require; all the strength you require; and probably the reason why you have not attained to a sense—a complete sense of your condition before God, is because you have not made enough in your religion of this "Christ crucified." You perhaps have not attained sufficient power over sin; because you have not yet felt the full influence of the doctrine of "Christ crucified." If you would have pardon—pardon coming home in all its fulness, all its sweetness to your hearts, look away to Christ, and keep the eye of your faith fixed upon Christ; the more you understand of Christ, the more will you thoroughly believe that God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you all iniquity.

And then if you rightly understand the crucifixion, if you rightly discover the import, the purpose, of "Christ crucified," you will have an argument against sin which you could derive from no other source. Let not only the beginning of your faith be upon Christ, but its fulness and its completeness be upon him also. Let Christ be the substance and life of your faith whilst you live, and look forward to the time when you shall pass from this world into the next; and until then, remember Christ, and Christ only, is to be the

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS.

object of that faith. You need not look elsewhere, you will find salvation—full salvation—eternal salvation, in Christ—"We preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are saved, Christ the wisdom of God, Christ the power of God." Amen.

THE EVANGELICAL PULPIT.

- No. 1, contains a Sermon by the Rev. J. STOUGHTON. "The Existence of Death, and the Destruction of Him who had the Power of Death."
- No. 2, a Sermon by the Rev. C. DUKES, M.A. "Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of the Lord."
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The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

A Sermon,

BY THE REV. J. ANGELL JAMES,

(OF BIRMINGHAM.)

AT FALCON SQUARE CHAPEL, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1851.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—PHILIPPIANS ii. 5—11.

THE churches of Christ which were established, watched, and cultivated by the apostles themselves, were not in that untroubled harmony, and repose, and affection, which many perhaps might imagine. They were rent by schism, agitated by faction, convulsed by controversy, and stained with imperfection like our own. The church at Philippi was no exception from this general rule, and it is evident, from the opening of this chapter ; strife and vain glory prevailed even there. To cure this disposition, the apostle not merely brings forward the force of precept, but proposes to them the example of one to whom they owed the homage due to God, the submission due to a master, and the affection due to a benefactor—even the Lord Jesus Christ, who, he reminds them, though higher than the highest, became, by his own voluntary condescension and will, lower than the least. To encourage them in the cultivation of a similar spirit of humility, he by implication at least, reminds them of those rewards of grace which they should receive in another world, even as our Lord Jesus Christ was not left to seek, in the voluntary humiliation which he assumed, but on account of which, was raised to the high state of honour and glory.

Such, then, is the design of this passage ; and whatever be the meaning of its language, it must of necessity, contain an extraordinary instance of humility and condescension ; and no interpretation of it whatever can be sound or good which does not bring this out. In explaining its momentous meaning, I shall, First, give a summary view of its contents. Secondly, a detailed explanation of its phraseology. I shall then shew the importance of the great doctrine which it contains. And, Lastly, enforce the cultivation and practice of the disposition which it enjoins.

In the First place, I intend to give a summary view of the contents of this passage. Every attentive reader of it will perceive that it exhibits three distinct states of condition of the existence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is, first, his *antecedent* state of divine dignity and glory—"Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Secondly, here is his *subsequent* state—to which he voluntarily descended—of humiliation and depression, "Made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man ; and being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Then

follows his *consequent* state—consequent upon the preceding state of humiliation and depression, of exaltation and glory—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is God, to the glory of God the Father."

It is of importance to remark, that whatever belonged to his antecedent state of glory and dignity, he possessed fully before his subsequent state of humiliation and depression; and that whatever he received of glory, in the consequent, or third state, was the reward of his humiliation, and is not at all to be confounded with what is said in the first part of the passage of his antecedent state of glory. The enemies of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ contend that all the ascriptions of glory and honour, which are made to Christ, and which seem to raise him above what is human, follow upon his resurrection, and are acquired; not natural honours and distinctions. This, however, is not to answer the argument for the Divinity of Christ contained in this passage; but is obviously to confound the distinct states set forth in the text; to confound the glory of nature with the glory of office; the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was, with the glory that he received as Mediator, and as the reward of redemption. In other words, the glory that belonged to him as the eternal God, and the glory that he acquired as the Son of Man. There is no exposition of this passage that has the semblance of truth or reason, which does not admit of these three distinct and separate, though united states, or conditions.

In the second head of discourse, I go on to explain in detail the phraseology of the passage, at least, a large portion of it, for I shall leave out the third, or consequent state. I shall take, of course, first, the language that appertains to his antecedent state of glory and dignity—"He was in the form of God." The opponents of the Divinity of Christ tell us that this means—*his being invested with the power of working miracles*. This cannot be true. Nowhere else in all the Scriptures is this power thus described. If this were its meaning, then Moses and the apostles were as truly in the form of God as Jesus Christ; whereas the language of the text obviously intended to confer upon him a distinction belonging to no other. Indeed the apostles, if this were true, were *more* in the form of God even than Jesus Christ; for they not only wrought miracles, as he did, but he himself told them that they should do "greater works" than his. And then, according to this representation, Jesus Christ was in the "form of a servant" before he was in the form of God; for he lived thirty years in our world before he wrought a single miracle; and, therefore, the order of the apostle should have been reversed, if this view of the passage were true; and it should have been said, "Jesus Christ was first in the form of a servant, and then afterwards arose unto the form of God. So that the Socinian view of the passage cannot be correct, according to any legitimate mode of interpretation, or course of argumentation. No! it is indicative of true and proper Divinity.

The expression is not intended to describe the *essence* so much as the *manifestation* of Divinity. It *implies* the essence, but it refers to that exhibition of Divinity which is made in some way, to us unknown, to the heavenly host—somewhat analagous, but altogether superior to the visible manifestation which God made of himself to the Jews within the holiest of holies, by the symbol of his presence upon the mercy-seat. The "form of God," then, signifies the *manifestation* of Deity by some awful, glorious, indescribable, and inconceivable symbol of his presence in the celestial world.

"Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Did not consider it any usurpation to claim and receive the honours of Divinity. Did he not claim Omniscience, when to the Seven Churches he said, "I am He that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men?"—Omnipresence, when he said, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?"—Eternity, when he said, "Before

Abraham was, I am?"—Omnipotence, when with such sublimity, he declared to John in the Isle of Patmos, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, saith the Lord Almighty?" Did he not receive every expression of homage that was paid to him, while in this earth? Is there a title, an honour, an operation of glory ascribed to the Father that is not, without limit and without reserve, ascribed to the Son? But we are told this is not a right translation; that it should be rendered, "*He did not eagerly grasp at resemblance to God.*" That having the power of working miracles, he did not, on that account, claim to be God. We accept the emendation; but it makes nothing for the views of those by whom it is asserted. If, as I have already remarked, the passage is intended to bring forth the sublimest instance of humility that could be presented to us, what humiliation is there, if this view of the case be true—that He who was but man, though invested with the power of working miracles, should not actually claim to be God? What should we say of an individual who would bring forward the conduct of some petty officer of some small municipality who, because he officiated in the character of an officer or constable, did not claim the honours of the imperial crown? Is this an act of humility? Could it have been an act of condescension and humility on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ not to do that which would have been the greatest blasphemy for the most exalted creature in the universe to do—not claim the honours of Divinity? Was it any humiliation of Paul and Barnabas, when the inhabitants of Lystra were going to worship them, they suggested at once they were but men of like passions with themselves, and refused the homage? Was it an instance of humility on the part of the angel that he did not receive homage when the apostle fell at his feet, and was about to worship him?

We now take up the language that is employed in describing the *subsequent* state of our Lord's humiliation and depression, "*He made himself of no reputation.*" Here, again, critics suggest, and with propriety, a little alteration in the rendering. They would have it, "*He emptied himself—divested himself.*" Of what? Not of the essence of divinity; that he could not do. And here we borrow a proof that our view of the meaning of "the form of God" is a correct one, because Christ never divested himself of the essence of the God-head, but he could divest himself of its manifestation; and this is its meaning. He emptied himself—divested himself of it. When he rose from his throne of glory in heaven, and came down to our world in the character of a Saviour, he threw over the form of God the veil of humanity; and instead of coming to our world arrayed in the splendour of divinity, he appeared as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" he divested himself of it, and "took upon him the form of a servant," appeared in a low menial condition, even as man. He did not come as monarch, warrior, or hero, but he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, passed through life in the lowest state of poverty; so that he could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

And he was made in the likeness and fashion of man, that is, truly and properly man. But his humiliation stopped not there. He came not, as we have already observed, in the pomp of majesty, the splendour of exalted rank; this had been condescension. He came as a poor man. But his humility stopped not *even* there either, for the language goes on to state that "he was found in fashion as a man," that is, truly and properly man. Another proof, I think, that the interpretation I have given of the "form of God" is correct. If the "fashion of man" means truly and properly man; the "form of God" means truly and properly God. But observe, his humility ended not in his incarnation, or merely becoming man, "*He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.*" Obedient unto death! Is not death the common lot of humanity? Is not the loftiest monarch as truly subject to the king of terrors as the meanest peasant of his realm? "Humbled himself, and became obedient unto death!" How comes that to be humility in Christ which is necessity in every one else, and which would have been necessity in him as well as every

one else, had he been only man—mortal like ourselves? But we are told that he “*humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death.” This implies that there was no antecedent necessity for his doing it apart from what he came to accomplish, that there was nothing in his nature, nothing in his conduct, which subjected him to the king of terrors. How comes that but that there was a singularity of nature in him which appertained to none others but himself? He tells us that “No man taketh his life from him, that he laid it down of himself.” Was it any humiliation in the apostles or in Moses to die? was it not the law of their nature? How, then, we still leave the question, how can it be set forth as illustrating humility in our Lord Jesus Christ that he condescended to die? It is because he stood distinct from all mortals—he was the Son of God as well as the Son of Man.

But, my brethren, we should fall short altogether of the extent of our Lord’s humiliation if we ever stopped here; step by step he goes down from depth to depth, even to a lower depth still, till he has reached the very last stage to which humility itself could conduct him. The sentence would have been complete of itself, if there had been nothing further stated. “He *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death.” But that would have told but half the story—that would have left the sublimest wonder untold, and therefore he goes on to say, “Even the death of the cross.” There is a graduated scale of rank even in the hands of the king of terrors; there are doors to the gloomy mansions of the dead for both plebeian and patrician; there are additional stages of degradation and infamy, even in the last stern act of justice when taking away human life. In ancient times there were the axe, the hemlock, and the cross; in modern times there are the halter, the axe, and the soldier’s bullet; and it would be felt by many the very bitterness of death to go out of existence in the lowest stage of degradation. It is recorded of that interesting soldier, Major Andres, and I bring it forward for the purpose of illustrating the subject of the text, that when taken as a spy in the American war, and doomed to death, he solicited from Washington the single and simple favour, that he might die the soldier’s instead of the felon’s death—that he might be shot instead of hanged. And when brought in front of the gallows a thrill of horror passed through his frame, not that he was to die, but that he was to die thus, for it was concealed from him that the mode of his execution was not to be changed until just that moment that it was to take place.

Think, then, of the wondrous condescension of our Lord, “He *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*” Ah, my brethren, you and I see nothing but *glory* in the cross. Ever since it has been assumed as the visible symbol—the badge of christianity, it has waved in the banners of victorious armies, it has adorned the palaces of princes, it has been employed, as it has been supposed, to give sanctity to places of worship, it forms, even to this day, although to me it is a kind of desecration of it, an ornament, a personal ornament to hang around the neck of beauty. We have acquired in these days all this veneration for the cross, which, however, never belonged to it on its own account. Why, an ancient citizen of Rome would have died an hundred deaths rather than to have died once by crucifixion; and many of you know, who are read in history, that one of the most eloquent of Tully’s orations, directed against Venice, was intended to arouse indignation against his judges because they had dared to put a citizen of Rome to death by the cross. Oh, then, christian men and women, think, think of what you owe to Jesus Christ, not merely for dying, but for dying upon the cross, a death accursed by the Jewish law, and the very lowest depth of degradation and ignominy to which any one could be sunk by the law of the Gentiles. “He *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*” Oh, thou Lamb of God, we in these days cannot even conceive of the ignominy to which thou didst condescend for us, and for our salvation!

We now proceed to the third division of the subject, to show, as far as can be, the importance of the doctrine which the text contains, I mean the true

and proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the strongest single passage in support of this doctrine in the view of the preacher, which is contained in this whole range of scripture. No sophistry can get rid of it, no criticism can weaken its force; there it is, and there it will remain to proclaim the Godhead of Christ to the end of time.

But I am to consider now, according to the announcement of this division of discourse the *importance* of this doctrine; and this will appear if we consider that, apart from it there can be no consistent explanation of Holy Scripture. No one can have read the New Testament, I think, with impartiality who is not struck with this fact. There are some passages which seem to speak of Christ as having more than humanity, and others there are that seem to speak of him as having less than divinity; there are passages which, taken by themselves, would imply that he was only man; there are other passages which, taken in the same isolation, would imply that he was only God; so that there is no consistent explanation of Scripture which does not take in the two views of our Lord's divine and human nature. Here is the reconciling point; here is that which gives harmony and consistency to what would otherwise appear discrepancy and opposition. The doctrine of our Lord's divinity, however, is not so much formally proved in Scripture as asserted—taken for granted. We find it not merely in passages like the present, where it is so explicitly and intentionally set forth, it meets us at almost every turn.

I knew an Unitarian physician who was brought over to the orthodox view of the persons of Christ in the following manner: He visited a patient for whom he felt a very deep interest and tender solicitude. He was a baptist minister, and an exceedingly interesting young man. The patient was so impressed with the disinterested, devoted, and affectionate attention of his medical friend, that he was at a loss for some means of expressing his gratitude in the most efficient manner. Knowing that the physician was an Unitarian, he felt an earnest anxiety for his conversion to a sounder creed; sometimes he ventured, as far as his strength would allow, to discuss the doctrines of Scripture with his kind and candid friend by his bedside. On one occasion he lent him a volume on the Unitarian controversy, and obtained a promise that it should be read carefully and seriously through. The book was returned, with the painful information to the lender, that it had made no alteration in the views of the physician. As the closing scene drew nigh, the dying minister, as his last resource, and as the likeliest means of leading to the desired change in the opinions of his medical friend, obtained a promise that after his decease, he would read with great seriousness and as much impartiality as his already long formed opinions would allow, the gospel according to John; and pause, after every saying of Christ, and every reference to him, and ask himself the question, "Can this be said *by* and *of* one that was only man?" He faithfully complied with his patient's request, and rose, from the perusal of this portion of Holy Scripture, a firm believer in the true and proper divinity of Christ, and held fast this great truth till his death.

The importance of the doctrine will appear again, when we consider its connexion with the whole system of divine truth—with all the doctrines—the fundamental doctrines, of the gospel. It is to them what the sun is to the solar system; that which assigns to them their station, imparts to them their radiance, light, and vigour; guides their revolutions, and keeps the whole in harmony. Take away this Central Luminary, the harmony is broken, the elements rust to chaos, and the light of salvation is extinguished for ever. What is the doctrine of the atonement apart from the doctrine of the divinity of Christ? The value of the great sacrifice on Calvary arises not so much from the quantity of the suffering, or even altogether the quality of it, as it does from the nature and the dignity of the sufferer—"He hath by himself purged away our sins." The doctrine of the atonement if it mean anything, must mean a scheme by which the authority of the law, and the principles of God's moral government, shall be as stable and firm, even though man be pardoned, as if the whole race of transgressors had sunk together, as the conse-

quence of their own sins, to the bottomless pit. And to talk of the manifestation of divine justice through the atonement of one who is but a mere creature, is "as rational as it would have been," says Mr. Fuller, "to have spoken of British public justice having been displaced, if the monarch of these realms had pardoned the deluded followers of the pretender, through the sufferings of a worm transfixed on the point of a needle." We want the divinity of Christ to give efficacy to the sacrifice; and it is chiefly that which imparts all its value to the atonement of the cross. As a principle, the doctrine of the atonement is as essential to our hope, as it is interesting as a fact to our faith. When looking around for a Saviour, such as my conscience and the Word of God tell me I need, direct not my eye to a man, a mere man, a creature, a mortal like myself. My Redeemer owns my person, I am his property, I have committed myself into his hands; and all I am and have as an immortal being, are in his keeping, and all I expect hereafter is from him. What! commit myself—my eternal all, into the hands of a mere creature like myself? I could not trust my body for its everlasting welfare to the highest archangel that glows and serves in the temple of God above, much less my precious and immortal soul! The hour is approaching of transition from time to eternity, from the visible to the invisible world; and in that awful hour I must commit myself—my departing spirit, into the hands of Jesus. What! again I say, into the hands of a mere mortal like myself? No! he is in the "form of God," and thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

But I go further still. I say, according to my own view, I could not trust the Bible as a safe book, if Jesus Christ be not divine. The Bible was given to root out idolatry, to establish the unity of God; yet if Jesus Christ be not divine, it has established an idolatry more subtle, and therefore more dangerous, and more extensive, than any other which ever prevailed; for is it not a fact, that ninety-nine out of a hundred, that have read the Bible in times even of freedom of thought, when a persecuting church does not dictate their creed, when the terrors of the law do not hang over them, compelling them to receive a particular creed, have received the truth that Christ is divine? so that the Bible seems to have failed in its object, and established, I repeat, an idolatry more extensive, more subtle, and therefore the more dangerous. See, then the importance of the doctrine contained in this momentous and glorious passage.

I go on now to the fourth and last head of my discourse; which is to enforce the cultivation of the disposition which is enjoined in the text—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." All who are read in the history of classical antiquity, know full well that whatever morality there was among the Greeks and Romans, stood in no connexion whatever with their religion. Their theology and their morality were in opposition to each other. Some of their writers, especially of the stoic school, said many fine and beautiful things—things which any Christian might do well to remember. The philosopher must have wished his pupils to avoid the priests, and not to come within the precincts of the temple. You know that the gods of Greece and Rome were deification of the worst passions and vices of humanity, which were exalted, as Foster says, to the heavens, to be invested with Olympian charms, and thence come down with a divine authority to make men wicked; so that these men were made wicked by their religion. Their gods and goddesses were characters such as one would scarcely mention in a religious assembly. What a glorious contrast does Christianity present to all this! Christianity is not merely a system of doctrine, a synopsis of principles; nor is it a book of mere duties, but it is a union of both; a connexion of the most sublime theology, and the purest morality, and the morality is the emanation of its theology. Nothing in the New Testament is purely scientific—all is practical. Nothing is merely theoretical—all is something to be done; and it is the glory of Scripture, that while it inculcates the most exalted pity and devotion, it makes love to God productive at the same time of love to man; and allows no man to consider that he loves God, who does not love his fellow creature also. The

first and second tables of law do not clash against each other, or break each other into pieces; they are a consistent system of theology and ethics—ethics, however, based upon theology. And in the New Testament, all the strongest motives of right and holy conduct are drawn to the very doctrine, which as sinners we are required to believe for our salvation, down to the very inculcation of the duties between man and wife.

How fully the character of God is presented in the teaching of Scripture! With what attributes is he invested, and in what light enthroned, and presented, all his moral perfections as the example to be imitated. And if it be true that the devout worshipper most resembles his God, what must be the character of those who bow at the throne of the holy, holy Lord God, and return from thence, to give evidence by his conduct, of the sincerity of his worship? So with respect to the character of Christ. Here the uncreated glories of the Godhead are exhibited in association with the milder beauties of a perfect man, and both are brought in, not merely as something to be admired, and worshipped, but as something to be imitated. Bear with me, then, while I inculcate the disposition mentioned in the text—“*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*” Christians, look at your model. Professor of religion, let me present to you your Great Pattern—you are to be like Christ; you are not only to have *his* character stamped upon *your* character, you are to have *his* mind introduced into *your* mind. You are not only to act as he acted, not only to speak as he spake, you are to think as he thought; you are to feel as he felt; you are to will as he willed; you are not only to stand on the outside of this divine living temple upon earth, looking at its majesty, beauty, and glory, but you are to go into the holiest of holies of his own immaculate Spirit and heart, and looking round upon that as far as it is possible for you to conceive of it, you are to say, “I am to resemble this.”

Now there are two things in the disposition or “Mind of Christ,” which this passage brings out. I shall confine myself to those.

1st. *Humility*, the hardest lesson for man upon earth to learn. A lesson so hard, that even the rebel angels in heaven did not permanently learn it, but for want of it forfeited their seat in glory, and were expelled from the celestial world. Humility! that meek and lowly disposition which makes a man backward to take offence, equally backward to give offence, and very forward to pardon offence. That meek and lowly disposition of mind which suppresses the pride of intellect, or wealth, or rank. That meek and lowly disposition which makes a man sometimes willing to forego his own rights rather than disturb the world by the turbulent assertion of them. That meek and lowly disposition which extinguishes the lust of power, the love of precedence, and which makes a man love to be first, second, last, anything, nothing, in order that he may serve God, the church and the world. And oh! brethren, this is what we want—the mind which is in Jesus. Look at the mischief that has been done by the contrary disposition to that enjoined in the text. It hath half depopulated heaven: it hath peopled hell with miserable ghosts; it lives in our world, brought and kept there by satan; it hath embroiled families, disturbed churches, and engaged nations in destructive hostilities. Pride is the fire-brand brought up from hell in the hands of satan, and with which he has fired our earth; and the conflagration still rages, injurious to the most sacred interests of humanity. Pride! why is it not so bad, that men have contrived means of hiding its deformity, by calling it by another name? They are ashamed to own it as it is, and they have called it “spirit, honour, dignity;” and they have represented humility as a low, servile, abject thing. Why don’t they carry out their principle, and reproach the Saviour, and tell him he acted unworthily of himself that he did not scatter thunderbolts of vengeance from his throne upon guilty man, rather than die upon the cross for his redemption? Pride is the besetting sin of our nature, it is ever doing the devil’s work, and it has turned many men into devils.

Now this epidemic of our race, this besetting sin of humanity, needed something to counteract it, something more than the force of precept; we wanted

an example which by its majesty should command, by its pathos should melt, and by its power should constrain. We have it, "He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Christians! I take you this morning to Calvary. Look at that scene. Who hangs bleeding there? and for whom? The Son of God! for you. Before you take your eye from this scene, let me ask you, will you be sensitive of offence, jealous of your dignity, susceptible of injury, anxious for precedence, quarrelsome for your rights? What! a student of the cross! What! a follower of Christ; and proud, sensitive, jealous? Remember when you came into the church of God, you took your station where voices from every quarter sounded in your ear, "Be ye clothed with humility; let the mind of Jesus be in you." Therefore let us go home this morning, upon such a subject as this, to cultivate the mind that was in Christ.

2nd. That mind was *benevolent* as well as *lowly*. That which has been exhibited this morning, must be traced up to the principle of *love*. And here, we are reminded of the language of the Apostle in another place, "That we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the height and depth, and breadth, and length, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Mark, that "*love that passeth knowledge*." I can gauge the love of the human heart, I can fancy the love even of a martyr; there is nothing here beyond my conception; "But the love of Christ passeth knowledge." Must he not be divine of whom this is said? To what meaningless rapsody, to what exaggerated hyperbole, to what groundless bombast some of the expressions of the apostle must be reduced, if Christ were nothing but man; if he were not divine as well as human. But admit his divinity, and these expressions, which if he were only human, would be too high, would, on the supposition he were God, be too low. "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Ah! but then add to this the other language of the apostle, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Jesus Christ was the incarnation of love, his words were the speeches of love, his conduct was the action of love, his tears were the droppings of love, his miracles were the wonders of love, his death the martyrdom of love; and you are his disciples. And this is not, I repeat, to be the object of our admiration, but of our imitation. "See how he loved you, and see how you ought to love others."

My brethren love is the single word, the little monosyllable which on the one hand seems to set forth all that is divine in God, all that is glorious in redemption, and all that is practical in human conduct; and that man abjures the Bible, abjures Christianity, and Christ, and his ministers, who does not imitate him in the practice of love, earnestly, active, liberal love. And this mind that was in Christ, shews us the objects of our affection, the salvation of souls.

The cross is the most impressive comment, on these words, the soul—salvation—damnation. What must be the value of the soul, when he who made it died for it? What must be that salvation achieved by the cross? What must be damnation when Jesus died upon the cross to avert it? My hearers, is that soul of yours the object of your deepest solicitude? Have you ever appraised the value of the soul at the cross—your *ONE* soul? Have you ever thought of the blessing of salvation at the cross? Have you ever contemplated the horrors of damnation at the cross? Go, then, this morning, from the house of God, to make these objects your study, at that very situation, and with this end.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE DOOR OPEN—THE DOOR SHUT.

A Sermon to Young Men,

BY THE REV. ANDREW REED, D.D.,

(OF WYCLIFFE CHAPEL,)

AT ISLINGTON CHAPEL, SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1851.

*In connexion with the Islington branch of the
Young Men's Christian Association,*

“And the door was shut.”—MATT. xxv. 10.

I HAVE been requested, as you know, my dear hearers, to address myself chiefly to young men on this occasion. I have accepted such an invitation with real pleasure. I have to address persons at a time of life quite prepared to comprehend and weigh the most serious of subjects; and I have a confidence in their candour that they will give attention—attention not as to the lips of a man, but as to the present and holy God. I have also had a pleasure in accepting such an invitation, because I still sympathise feelingly with the condition of the young men in our great metropolis. I well remember the period when I, as a young man, started in life, amid the bustling occupations of this vast city, and as I remember, I tremble to think of the many evils and snares to which I was at once exposed. Anything, therefore, that I can do, by counsel or by sympathy, to confirm young men in every principle that is morally sound or religiously true, I shall most cheerfully place at their feet. One consideration which has weighed much on my mind, is the responsibility of our young men, especially at the present day. Whatever the character of our young men shall be, it will assuredly mould the character of the next generation; and this will give its character to our churches and to our nation, and perhaps more than any other consideration, determine our condition in both capacities.

I have therefore sought, my dear young friends, to commend to you a subject of the highest consideration. We say of many things in life, that they are of *first necessity*; so we consider our clothing, and our food, and our fuel; we must have them, or we must perish. There are secondary considerations, that we wisely teach to wait on these first and imperative necessities. It is equally true in religious concerns. There are things, however important in their connexion, that are still subordinate; and there are subjects which are of first-rate importance, demanding our earliest consideration and claiming that we should come at once to a full decision. Our beloved Lord is placing this before his hearers in one of his most beautiful and affecting parables; He is announcing in figurative terms, the great salvation he came to impart; and while he announces the vast benefit, he connects it with serious warnings. These advantages, while they are our's, are making to themselves wings, and will quickly

pass away and be our's no longer. You will see that such a sentiment is conveyed in the words which I have read—"And the door was shut."

I have merely to raise two simple propositions on these words. In the First place, I will announce to you that the *door is still open*. In the Second place, with equal fidelity, I would announce to you that *the door that is now open, will soon be shut*, and shut for ever. Join me, I beseech you, at the throne of the heavenly grace, that we may not trifle with these solemn terms; that they may reach our hearts; that they may dispose us to seek after life,—life as it is revealed in Jesus, before all life shall give place to a fearful and dark eternity.

In the first place, there is announced from the passage that *the door is yet open*. The door is to be shut, but it is yet open. This is a joyous truth; a truth well sustained by the entire teaching of revelation; a truth which it is part of my happy commission to reveal to you for your guidance and for your acceptance. The door is yet open. You see at once, that the expression is figurative, that it is highly significant, and that it has the advantage of being so simple and plain, that it requires no exposition.

In the first place, observe that this door of *hope* is now open. The first dispensation to man as the creature of God in a state of innocency, was a dispensation of hope, God brought his innocent creature near to himself; God came into covenant with him; God promised, in a meek obedience to his will, life,—life abundantly; yea, immortal life. Had man retained his state of obedience and innocency, he would assuredly have inherited this blessing of life for eternity; but man, though he might have stood, fell; and in falling, forfeited his claim and his place; violated that first dispensation of the Divine goodness; and made his condition at once, and by a single act positively hopeless. He was a sinner, he had transgressed that dispensation; he knew nothing of pardon; knew nothing of a Saviour; he knew that God would receive nothing at the hands of his creatures but what was perfect in its character and spirit, and it was therefore impossible that he could be authorized to cherish hope. The dispensation therefore closed with the expulsion of the transgressor, and in the enforcement of the penalty, and had no other dispensation arrived to us, there would have been just the consequence of our sin, to suffer and still to suffer. But as you well know, my dear hearers, there has come to us another dispensation. The sentence of wrath and of curse is suspended, not forgotten, not superseded, but suspended, and in that period of gracious suspense, there is introduced another economy, and that is also pre-eminently a dispensation of hope—hope, as accommodated to our condition—not the hope that is proper to an innocent creature, but the hope which is adapted to the sinful and guilty creature—hope through Christ—hope through the divine mercy; hope for man as a transgressor; hope for his pardon, hope for his recovery, and hope for his restoration to a full enjoyment of the divine favour. This dispensation of hope has come to us by Jesus Christ. For it he has been satisfied to submit himself to law and justice; for it, he has taken upon himself virtually our nature—human nature; for it, he has borne all reproach, all poverty, and all shame, and the wrath of God, and a violent and ignominious death. He thought nothing too precious to give to reverse our condition, and to bring us out of a hopeless state into a state of hope, and hence he has shed hope all around our path, upon our very spirit, and has made this hope near to us and inestimable by the gospel, in which it is recorded. Brethren, by this gospel, there is hope; everywhere hope. The character of Christ is full of hope; the grace of Christ is full of hope; the death of Christ is full of hope; the work of Christ is charged with hope. We have through Christ a better dispensation than was known to paradise; we have a glorious Mediator, we have an inviolable covenant, we have an eternal promise of life, and pardon and felicity. The door of hope is still open.

In the second place, I observe, the door of *privilege* is also open. Frequently

privilege is presented to us under such a figure, and it is a striking way of representing it. The young man who is privileged to worship in this house of prayer, may well contemplate his innumerable distinctions and favours. First of all, I would ask you to consider that life is a vast privilege. Life was forfeited through sin; you have no claim whatever to the possession of the precious treasure of life. When you look around you, you see how many have fallen by the hand of death, as young as yourselves, and perhaps younger, and yet you are spared. Life is an inestimable treasure. As connected especially with the hopes of the gospel, the means of our salvation, it is of inestimable value. Now this privilege is your's. You have life, you have the faculties and uses of life; you have the opportunities presented to you for the exercises of life, and the advancement of your spiritual welfare in life. These are privileges which distinguish your lot from that of multitudes.

Then may I not point to most of you, and say, you have been indulged in the privilege of education? you have been taught, and it is scarcely possible to think of the youth growing up in our metropolis, or even in our country without education, and I cherish the hope that you have not only been educated, but that you have been educated piously and religiously, in the fear of God. The first dear name your mothers lips uttered in your remembrance has been that of a Saviour. How often have you been pointed to him; how often have you been taught to acknowledge Providence, and how often before you well understood the character of prayer, have you been taught to bow in reverence and to pray unto God! This, also, is a privilege, a privilege which you should regard in your memory with great delight.

Then there is the vast privilege of the Word of life, and the day of God. This, undoubtedly, is a great privilege. The holy Scriptures are your's. Perhaps you have been taught that from your youth and childhood up; perhaps you have been taught to regard them as containing the substance of your salvation, as able to make you wise, wise unto godliness, wise unto the life that is, and unto the life that is to come. Great is your privilege. You have the holy Scripture in your mother tongue, you have been taught early to read its gracious manifestations of Divine mercy; its hallowed stores of divine truth, have been more or less deposited in your early memory, and they have been burned in there, so that they shall never be erased, or forgotten. You have, in addition to the literal word, the ministry of that word. By your appearance in this house of prayer, I conclude you ordinarily wait on the ministry; and if you should be disposed to neglect the written Word, and allow it to slumber in your closet, still the voice of the minister addresses you, entreats you, it seeks your enlightenment, it desires, it pants for your salvation. The great testimony and desire of a devoted minister in labouring amongst you is just this: "We beseech you, as in Christ's stead, that ye be reconciled unto God; that ye know your peace; that ye regard the day of your visitation; and that ye become wise to your eternal happiness." Is it no small privilege to be thus indulged, to have this divine Volume in your possession, to regard it as the revelation of God, to find in it the treasure of your salvation, and to have associated with it a living ministry, to make it plain, to present it in its urgent claims, and entreat you by all means to regard it, to accept it, as unfolding to you the way of life and peace? And how vast the single privilege of the Sabbath! You complain, and perhaps you complain justly, of the toil and of the labour, and of the time occupied by engagements through the days of the week, but there is still your Sabbath—the day of rest—the day affording physical rest—the day inviting you to spiritual rest—the day typifying a state of eternal rest and happiness. Oh! how precious to the young man, and how sacred should be the holy Sabbath! All that time should be dedicated to his spiritual and eternal welfare; all that time he should seek to become more fully conversant with the will and the mind of God; all that time he should seek to elevate himself from the world which is around him, and the things which are

dying, while he uses them, to the life which is eternal, and the joy which is incomparable.

In addition to this, possibly you are distinguished and privileged by many kind and Christian friends. You cannot have received your whole religious education without having more or less of religious and paternal superintendence. You have to recur to this as a great distinction in life. If this has been your privilege, it should be acknowledged as the hand of God; if this has been your privilege, you should especially yield yourself to him in the acknowledgment of those mercies which have marked your infancy, grown upon you in childhood, and perhaps contributed to make you all that you are, as a young man looking forward to future life and duty.

And is it true that you have still around you such benefits? Is it true that in this house of prayer there sits by your side the beloved, the pious, and the praying parent? Is it true, that from your earliest recollection, those of your friends who have been most concerned for your welfare, have directed you to that welfare, at the cross of Christ, in the testimony of the gospel and in the blessed hope of immortality? Is it all true? And do you now feel persuaded that the first desire of the parent's heart is your salvation—that you may escape the wrath to come, and be brought into a state of reconciliation to God your Maker, by believing in the death of Christ, your Saviour? Are you conscious of this—and does this consciousness rest with you? Do you retire at night upon it? Do you awake with it in the morning? Are you constrained to admit that it is a great privilege and makes you deeply responsible? Oh! it presents to you the hope of your soul.

And in addition to this, my dear young friends, it is possible that there is another privilege of which you are more or less conscious. Time has been perhaps in your life, when perplexed, when anxious, when disappointed, when falling back from the world which you have been tempted to idolize, and seeking refuge for your spirit in better resources,—time has been when you have sought your closet, when you have acknowledged your state of feeling and sorrow before God, and when the voice of God has addressed itself to you, informing you of a true source of happiness, and beseeching you as a Father, to regard your eternal interest. And possibly, that very voice is speaking to you now. If there is any light in your mind, any tenderness in your conscience, any disposition to be more serious than usual, may it not be referred to that divine and prevailing and gracious influence which is essential to all wisdom, to all sanctity, and to all grace?

You have, therefore, an open door presented to you; it is the door of privilege. How great that privilege! But in addition to it, strengthening and commending the whole, there is still the privilege of youth lingering with you. You are young; you are full of energy, full of ardour, full of strength; your character is not yet formed; your path in life is not yet settled; everything is open before you, everything full of promise, everything full of prospect and full of trembling responsibility. Oh! what a day of grace—the acceptable day of the Lord! Now—to-day is the time in which you should respect his voice—in which you should bow to his authority, in which you should look up to him from your emergency, and say, “My Father, from this time Thou art the chosen guide of my youth.”

In the third place, I observe, *the door of salvation is open*. The revelation which God has communicated to us, is not merely meant to awaken hope, and to point to privilege however great; it is designed to assure us of salvation—of a present salvation. It is a substantial blessing; it is meant to be a present benefit. Whatever there may be of hope for the future, it does not postpone our expectation to that future, but brings to us a vast and present benefit. You are to contemplate, therefore, this salvation as now presented to you; you are to regard it as a benefit which you may now receive and enjoy. You must not, as many have done, refer the great consummation of these things to the

judgment or to time to come; the present time is the time of your privilege, and the present time is the best of all time to realise and to accept the salvation of the Son of God. In fact, my dear hearers, if you are truly saved—quite understand and profoundly remember—that you must be saved in time, if you are truly saved, you must be saved on this earth of our's. Salvation will never come to you, if it does not come here; and therefore, it is a blessing which you should earnestly and instantly seek to appropriate to yourselves. Oh! rejoice that this salvation may now be your's—completely yours. You may be completely pardoned; you may be completely justified; you may be made completely happy; you may be truly sanctified by the Spirit of God; you may become truly a Christian, adopted into the divine family, walking with God, henceforth to the close of life, and passing out of life, to enter into that blessed and holy family.

Finally, I say that the *door of heaven itself is open*. Whatever we receive in time, it is meant to be an introduction to a glorious eternity. Heaven crowns all. The very salvation though it must be received and realized on earth, cannot be perfected here. The bodily life cannot be perfected; the spiritual life cannot be perfected; the promises of God cannot find their expansive and full accomplishment, while here; earth is all too narrow, too gross, and time is all too short for these higher manifestations of the divine character and mercy. You must, therefore, if you are truly a believer in Christ, you must die to live; you must pass out of time to enjoy immortality; you must realise the perfection of your nature and the perfection of your redemption before the throne of the eternal God, in heaven.

Brethren, what is there to be compared with it? As you advanced in life are you not led to the conclusion that in heaven alone you can find the satisfaction of your highest faculties and of your most sublime desires? Oh, there is nothing true but heaven, there is nothing bright but heaven, there is nothing real but heaven, there is nothing pure but heaven, there is nothing felicitating but heaven! Vain are the hopes that perish, however much they may attract our confidence, but sublime the hopes that find their fulfilment and accomplishment in heaven. The door of heaven is open, wide open; you are encouraged to enter. If you receive the salvation of Christ, heaven is your's: it is your's, already in miniature; it is your's already in earnest; it is your's already in prelibation. You do not entirely wait for heaven or for future blessedness, you are blessed already, redeemed already, you are a participator of spiritual life already, and entertain fellowship with the saints in life and eternity. The door of heaven is open—widely open; and we have a full and free invitation to enter and find rest and peace.

The second proposition is that *the door which is now open, will certainly and soon be shut*. This is the remaining teaching of Christ our Saviour, that the door is no more assuredly open, than that it will be shut. How significant is the expression! There will then come a period to all hope, to all penitence, to all forgiveness, and to all self-delusion. The man who has surrounded himself with vain imaginations and delusive hopes, will be stripped of them all; will stand before God in his own character; will stand before himself in his own character; will see that he is lost, and lost for ever. "The door will be shut." It will be shut in the solemn day of judgment. Nothing is more plainly avouched to us in Scripture, than the coming judgment. It is to come; it will surely come—and come quickly, "as a thief in the night." When it shall come, it will be universal, it will be irreversible; it will be strict and impartial; it will be a righteous judgment; it will expose all characters; it will bring the perfection of happiness in those who have trusted in the appointed salvation; and the perfection of confusion and wretchedness to those who despised it.

The judgment, therefore, brings to no man any hope; the judgment only deals with him, alas! as it finds him; it makes no change; it converts no sinner; it reverses the condition of no individual. "As the tree falls so it lies;" and

so the judgment receives it. It is not in judgment that we can rectify anything; not in judgment that we can plead to live again, and try to act better, and work out with diligence our salvation. Oh! no: judgment changes nothing; it reveals all things; every character will stand only as it is in the judgment to come. It is this period, therefore, to which we all must look, it is at this period that the door is shut. If we have not entered before, we cannot enter then. If we have not sought for pardon before, we cannot ask it then; and though we should ask it, we should despair of the very prayer which we uttered: and afraid and confounded by the sense of our sins we should call on the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us, and hide us from the piercing eye of a present God.

In the next place, the door will be shut by the event of our death. I have spoken necessarily of the judgment; and perhaps some of you have said, "Ah! but it is far away—it stands from us ages to come; we have no reason to think that it will be realised by any man on this earth, for a long, long, nameless period." And therefore, because the judgment comes not as in ancient times, "the hearts of the children of men are set to do evil." But pause, I beseech you, young men, and correct your judgment on this subject. The judgment is not virtually so far away: the judgment virtually is not standing from you ages and ages yet unknown: virtually, your judgment comes when death comes. There may still want the formality and the publicity of a universal judgment, and the solemnities of the final record of the sentence: but death settles for you and for me the question for ever! As we die, so we go unto the judgment—prepared or unprepared—forgiven or unforgiven—saved or unsaved. As we are in death, so we awake to the profound solemnities of judgment. It is, therefore, the period of death which we are to regard as so solemn and important to us. And do not think because you are flushed with health, because you are strong in youth, because you cherish properly this strength by habits of carefulness and temperance—do not think therefore, that you can promise yourself long life. Oh! of all who die in our world, the youth die most—the majority is still against you as young. It is in early life that death ravages our race—mows us down as the springing grass, and the opening flower of spring. Be therefore advised I beseech you, and do not so abuse the blessing of life, if even you hope that life may be your's for years to come, as to fortify yourselves against the hope of Christ, against preparation for a blessed eternity.

The door will be shut. *It may be shut before death.* I acknowledge that to be a very fearful sentiment; but still I must avow it—and faithfully avow it. I quite believe that in many cases this judgment, and this disposition of state of character happens before death; that the day of grace in the cases of some men is shorter than their lives; that they have run such a course, neglected such warnings, committed such transgressions, that God has privately pronounced against them his final judgment. Recur to Scripture I beseech you. This was the case with Cain; this was the case with Esau; this was the case with Judas; and this was the case with the entire people of Jerusalem; they had outlived their day of mercy, and provoked infinite wrath, and infinite wrath had consigned them over to an infinite and fearful judgment. It is not for us to pronounce on a man's condition. Some have ventured and dared to do this, but they have done it, I think, presumptuously. It is not for men to read the heart of man, and it is not for man, therefore, to say by searching the counsels of deity, what is his condition now, or what is his condition in the life to come. This we must leave; but while we leave it to divine wisdom and infinite grace, we may well derive from it solemn instruction. It is possible for an individual before death to have forfeited all his privileges, to have been given over to himself and to his own idolatry. God may have said to that person for his waywardness and his crimes as he said to Ephraim, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." And this may happen not merely in age and in advanced life, but in early life. There

is no reason why the youth should not plunge himself by his crimes, into such a fearful position. Suppose the case of a young man brought up in the bosom of love and piety—a young man brought under a faithful, searching ministry from his earliest remembrance—a young man under these privileges of illumination and teaching, the subject of manifold convictions and manifold resolutions, and many prayers, and finally under the temptations of a worldly life, becomes gradually seduced, overcome by temptation; at length a great struggle comes on between his principles, which incline him to sensuality and infidelity, and the convictions and impressions of divine truth, which incline him to God and immortality. If you could see the movements of his heart, you would see a tremendous conflict going on there. Perhaps that conflict is heightened by a living ministry, by loving parents, awakening the heart, imparting peculiar tenderness, and disposing him to penitence, and tears, and prayer and supplication. Oh! what a conflict!—what an agony of conflict! but mark the result. The great conflict and struggle in the bosom of the young man is this: “Shall I repent, and give up my sins, or shall I resist, and return to the world, and make myself as happy as I can?” Suppose that young man, under the power of temptation, and previous habits, resolves to do wrong, refuses to repent, resists, and extinguishes the conviction; how he hardens his spirit; how he dishonours God; how he resists the admonition of the Holy Ghost; how he accounts himself unworthy of eternal life, and exposes himself to eternal death!

Brethren, this may be—God grant that it is not!—realized by any person in this congregation. But this may be; this has been. There is a critical period in the life of all, and I believe that crisis comes over many a young man before he is well aware of it, and then, perhaps, all is determined for time and for eternity.

The door will be “shut.” *It may be shut at any time.* It is wisely hidden from us when this event shall take place. If the period and method were revealed to us, some might be led to despair, and others to presume; but because it is at any time, therefore we must not presume; and because salvation is present to us, and may be realized at any time, therefore we must not despair. At any time the door may be shut. It may be shut, therefore, when we least expect it, and our Lord seems to be communicating chiefly this instruction in the parable, “At midnight,” he says, “there was a cry.” When men were slumbering, when the wise and foolish alike were asleep, “at midnight, there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go forth to meet him.” Five were ready, and five were not ready; five were foolish, and five were wise. What is meant by that kind of equal division of character and condition? What is meant by such a separation as seems to run from pew to pew—from person to person, marking one as an unbeliever, and another as a child of God of happiness and of heaven? Five were foolish, and five were wise; as many were unprepared as were prepared for the coming of their Lord. He will come suddenly, and he may come at any time! and therefore the door may be shut even now; in an instant it will take place; and why should not that instant be now? Turn ye, turn ye, I beseech you, on these considerations; put it to yourself, what is your exact condition—not in reference to the mistaken views of your own conscience, but in reference to the word of God, which is to judge you, and the throne—the great high throne, before which you are to stand. Supposing, my dear hearers (the supposition cannot harm you) supposing that the door were to be shut to you now, I ask you, as in the presence of your Maker and the presence of your Judge, what is your conviction? Would you be found within that door, or without that door? would you be found welcome, or would you be found cast out? Oh, what a division it would make! none of us, perhaps, could stand the revelation which would thus come over us. If our last period of trial and of mercy were concluded this evening, and if the revelation of our actual character and condition, were made plain

and public to us all, what confusion, what fear, what hope, what joy, what trembling would overcome us! What division in the pew, what division in the beloved family circle, what division among professors, what division among those who had not taken to themselves a full and earnest profession! Oh! what a manifestation both of the redeeming mercy and the fiery indignation of God!

The door will be "shut!" *when it is shut it will be shut for ever!* it will never more be opened to us. Eternity will seal all. The period is for an "appointed time;" and when the appointed time is exhausted, the mediatorial dispensation ceases; the great decision and division take place upon those who love him and those who love him not; and that rests upon their condition and change of life for ever.

Brethren, however unwelcome and humiliating the truth, there is no truth more plainly written, and no truth more important to our guidance, and even to our salvation, than this one truth, that there is a like destiny as to the continuance resting upon the course of the sinner and the course of the saint. As heaven to the saint is to be an eternal heaven, so punishment is to be to the sinner an endless punishment. The very terms which record the immutable happiness of the Christian are the terms which record the immutable punishment of the transgressor. Now is the period of mercy; now is the period of return; now is the season in which we may seek and find the benefit of a full salvation; but allow this period, this blessed period, to expire, and there remains nothing for us, but the manifestation of exceeding wrath, and the manifestation of exceeding mercy, in our eternal happiness, or our eternal sorrow.

Oh! my dear hearers, it is this that makes this ministry a very burden; it is this that invests it with a solemnity which is inexpressible; and after all that you think we may have said in simplicity and earnestness, to present the subject to you; it is this that makes us retire afraid that we were not nerved with sufficient power to present with sufficient force. It is this eternity, this eternal heaven and eternal hell, an eternal acceptance with God, or an eternal exclusion from his presence—self-exclusion—self-condemned—righteously condemned—for even under that condemnation in that day the ungodly will shut their mouths.

My beloved young friends, accept this address as it is meant. I do not know that it could be charged with more affection; I do not know that I could more earnestly and simply seek to propound the elements of your salvation; but had I any other powers of presentation; or could I control so much of the time as to make it still bear on the subject, I would put it in other lights, I would present it in every aspect, I would intreat, beseech, and pray you not to neglect this great salvation. Oh! shall the Son of God come down from heaven to save us?—shall he bleed on the accursed tree to save us?—shall he live and reign for the express purpose of saving us?—shall he offer in our desperate circumstances of sin and crime, a full salvation for the chief of sinners, the vilest of the vile?—and shall it be lost on you?—you who must return love for love—you who affectionately attach yourselves to an affectionate parent—you who boast of the depth and the generosity of your affections? Is it nothing to you that Christ has loved you; and that Christ has died for you; that Christ lives for you; that he invites you to his bosom, to his friendship and confidence; that he will make you happy as an angel if you will only come to him, love him, trust in him for ever? May he sanctify his word. Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE CHARACTER AND OFFICE OF CHRIST.

A Sermon,

PREACHED AT THE NATIONAL SCOTCH CHURCH, CROWN COURT,

BY THE REV. J. CUMMING, D.D.

ON THURSDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1851.

On behalf of a Provident Institution connected with the Church.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." ISAIAH ix. 6, 7.

THESE words it is confessed by all, were spoken at least seven hundred years before the events recorded in the chapter which we have this morning read. There is no dispute that the prophecy was really thus written, so many hundred years before the event took place, which we regard as its fulfilment. There can, therefore, be no ground for the notion—which indeed we have never heard broached, that these words of Isaiah were written after the event; it is placed beyond all dispute that they were written seven hundred years before. If then this be established, and the testimony of friend and foe does establish it, the next question we have to ask, is to whom then does it apply? Can the Jew point to a character in the lapse of succeeding centuries, who fills up all the periods that are indicated here? Can he specify any one character, however illustrious in his nation, after the days of Isaiah, and prior to the present moment, (and we give him two thousand years for the experiment) that answers in all respects, or in most respects to that character which is spoken of in these verses as "The Wonderful, The Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace?" He has not attempted it; and the attempt would be foolish, were he to make it. But the moment we take these predictions and place them side by side with that mysterious babe of which we have been reading, we see intermingling in beautiful and relieving plain, those contrasting features of humanity and deity; of humiliation and greatness; of sorrow and joy, which play upon the whole surface of ancient prophecy that is inspired by God, and that it has to be applied to Him, whom Simeon held in his arms and called "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

No. 11.

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But before I enter upon the direct words of my text, let me ask you to notice the *perfect assurance* with which they are uttered. He does not say, "Unto us a child *shall* be born, unto us a Son *shall* be given;" but in the strain of ancient prophecy, he treats as already done that which he predicts to be, because the prophecies of God are as sure as the actual performances of men. That what God has predicted shall be, is as sure as if our eyes had seen it actually done. Faith in the promises of God may meet with greater confidence than the foot can tread upon the earth. What God has said, will be; his promises are as sure as our performances, and therefore the spirit of prophecy assumes the future to be past, and predicts in language appropriate to the present. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

In the second place, you have in this passage, the language of interest, of personal interest. "Unto *us* a child is born." It is not a fact insulating and of no avail to humanity, it is a fact in which we have a deep personal interest; and therefore he says, "Unto *us* a child is born;" for our salvation, for our holiness, for our happiness. It is unto *us*, not unto the Jews only, for "He shall be a Saviour for all people," to the Gentiles also; unto the believer of every age, in the world this Christ is come. It is a catholic gospel, it is catholic in its application, for it is for all mankind. It is catholic in its duration, for it is for all ages; it is not the sectarian conviction of a few, it is a catholic blessing, the gift of God for all mankind. "Unto us a child is born."

It is more than the language of personal interest, it is the language too of congratulation and of joy. It also ceases to be prophecy, and brightens into promise; nay, it also ceases to be promise, and brightens into prospects. It is the language of the glad heart, rather than the prophecy of the rapt poet. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given;" as if it were the first note of the jubilee, as if it were the prelude to the shepherd's song, as if it were rather the adoring hymn of the ancient Christian Jew, than the prophecy of an inspired and holy prophet. This, you will perceive in looking minutely at the words of the prophet, for he says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

And what is there in this? This is an event of every day occurrence; not a day passes in which a son is not born to somebody; not an hour in which the congratulatory accents may not be uttered. There must then be something very special, very peculiar in this child, that the prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit, should thus break forth into song, and express in so eloquent and congratulatory accents, his joy and satisfaction at the birth of such a Son. We know that it was no ordinary child; the angel announced to Mary that this child's name should be *Jesus*. The angels, when he was born, sung from the sky, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards man." The eastern kings came from afar, and presented gold and incense to this mysterious babe, and all the choir of heaven join in the anthem of praise. That light, irradiated the night with celestial splendour, completed what had been commenced by Isaiah, "Unto us is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord; fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy." It is therefore, the *office* of the child, the function he

will fulfil, the blessing he will dispense, the peculiarity of his character and of his mission, that warrants the congratulatory song, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Let us now look at the *varied characteristics of this child*. One statement is that "the government shall be upon his shoulders." This Child is to grow up to rule. The idea of Christ as king runs through all ancient prophecy, and he himself constantly announced it, even in his lowly and humble position or relation upon earth. When he said he was a king, in answer to questions that were put to him, he irritated the Jews, and made the Romans suspicious, and precipitated his own death, and crucifixion, and sacrifice. Yet there was no one function more frequently announced by ancient writers set to prophecy, than that he should be a *ruler*. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea." Again it is said, "His kingdom shall have no end." Again he is spoken of as the "King of kings."—"A ruler shall come out of Bethlehem-Ephratah: thou that be little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall he come forth that shall rule in Israel." He is the King of earth, and he now has the power. It is progressing in its moral influence, and shall be consummated by his personal presence. He is the King of saints, the King of nations. Earth lies constantly in his grasp, waiting for the hour when it shall be reprieved from the usurper, and be one of the brightest gems in this glorious diadem. All is at this moment naked and open to him with whom we have to do, and heaven basks in the glorious sunshine of his countenance. The day comes when heaven, earth, and all created intelligent beings shall sing the fulfilment of the distant prophecy, and the exercise of his sublime functions, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ."

Are we, my dear hearers, the subjects of this government now? Do we recognise his sceptre now? Do we feel that his kingdom now is "righteousness, and peace, and joy?" It begins in the individual heart, but it does not stop there. We must have his kingdom within us before we can ever be subjects of his kingdom without us. The great change must begin in each heart, and go forth transforming as it goes until the whole earth is lit up with his glory. The true secret of peace and harmony with nations is not the golden mines beneath the soil, nor the rich harvest above the soil, but the fruit of these pure, and lofty, and everlasting truths which deepen in the heart gratitude to God, glory to God, and good will to all mankind. The secret of peace in the kingdoms of the world is peace in the individual hearts of those who are its subjects; and until this peace that passeth understanding keep the individual heart, nothing else will make the national heart beat calm. It is not the army, or the navy, or the feat of the diplomatist that makes nations happy; it is the word of truth preached by the lips of love, and applied to man's heart by the Holy Spirit of God. The government is on Christ's shoulders, and unless human government be inspired from him and made like his, all being pervaded by the same spirit as it, it never can be permanent, happy, or enduring. The government, then, will be upon Christ's shoulders, "He shall reign from sea to sea." He is now *de jure* king of this our world, he will be, bye and bye,

de facto king of this our world. It is his in promise, it will be his, bye and bye, in the full possession. Ten thousand voices rise at the throne of grace unto him, and soon the voices of them by whom these prayers are offered will shout, "Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him; those also that pierced him; and all the kings of the earth shall wail because of him."

It is added as the commencing feature of this prophecy, that "his name shall be called *Wonderful*." In what respect does this appellation apply to the Lord Jesus Christ?—In what respect is he "wonderful?" He is wonderful in the constitution of his Person; he is "the brightness of the glory of God," shining through the frailty of frail humanity. He is God—all Scripture says so: he is man—all facts in his biography say so. It is a new thing—that which never has been realized, and not even conceived before—that God should be manifested in the flesh. And he is now that Central Temple which occupied his place in the ancient Jewish temple. Wherever they were located, whenever the Jews prayed, they always turned and looked towards the temple of Jerusalem.

Now Jesus is the true Temple, and wherever the Christian lives, he looks not geographically to any point in the globe, but he looks by faith and hope to Him who fills all space—the Lord Jesus Christ; and prays to God in his name, and through his mediation.

He was wonderful in *birth*. Read the tidings which we have this day been perusing; born in lowliness, humility, and wretchedness; of a discredited mother, of a family sunk in the deepest depths of want; as "the man of sorrows," testifying while he who was thus born, was the "mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."

He was wonderful in his *life*. How remarkable was his life; how quiet, yet how eloquent; how unassuming, yet how impressive was the exercise; how little the noise or the trumpet sound he made; and yet these foot-prints impressed upon Jerusalem are as indelible as the sun; and the influence he has left behind him grows with the lapse of years; and nations look back to Jerusalem as the scene of the sublimest fact, and to Jesus as the Author of the greatest blessings; and all eternity will only make more manifest to us how wonderful was he who was born King of the Jews.

Again: his *preaching* was wonderful; so wonderful, that the exclamation is uttered by his enemies, "Never man spake like this man." Nothing more simple than the preaching of Jesus, and yet nothing more impressive. It is a perfect instance of the sublimest thoughts, inspired by the simplest words; and it is a practical proof that great thoughts couched in plain terms will never be without responsible effect in the hearts and the consciences of men. His illustrations were drawn from the corn fields, the green pasture, the birds of the air, the fish of the deep, the beasts of the field. So plain and familiar that all men knew them; and that he appears with perspicuity. The light and love that shine from all he said, made men exclaim, "Never man spake as this man."

I need not say his *death* was wonderful. It was not a martyr's death, sealing his testimony with his blood; but a victim's expiation, making atonement

for the sins of all mankind. His death was peculiar, distinctive, alone. Never man died as he died—never man will die as he died. Men have died under the sentence of the fall, men have died martyrs to the sincerity of their conviction, men have died martyrs to the truths they have held; but never man died, and never man can die, as an expiation, an atonement for sins. So peculiar, distinctive, and wonderful was the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, then, whether we think of his birth, his life, whether we listen to the words of his lips, or read the history of his death, we are equally satisfied that the epithet pronounced by Isaiah is strikingly characteristic of Jesus—"His name shall be called Wonderful."

He is next described as the "Counsellor." "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor." In what respect is he so? "In him," says the apostle, "are all the treasures of wisdom." The words he spake are still the richest treasures of wisdom. Do not think that the wisdom of this world has outgrown the wisdom of the New Testament. Men approach christianity as they would approach a distant star, it only grows brighter the nearer they approach it, and yet it is so superior to all that we know that never shall we be able absolutely to reach it. Philosophers, princes, and statesmen can sit at the feet of Jesus, and they are refreshed under the lessons that he teaches; the mechanic can sit at the feet of Jesus, and carry off lessons of precious wisdom from him. He is the Counsellor in the midst of darkness, our Guide in the midst of perplexity, our Instructor in the noblest of schools, held up as the light to our feet, and the lamp to our path, our Prophet, our Teacher, our Counsellor. Do you consult him? Do you ask him what you must do to be saved? He can tell you. Do you ask the way to heaven? He can tell you. Do you ask how you shall be comforted on earth, or how you may be happy after it? He alone can tell you. If he be a "Counsellor," is he so to us? In vain he is "Wonderful," in vain he is a "Counsellor," unless we personally find and feel that he is so to us. Do we make use of him as such? Do we apply to him as such? Do we bring our perplexities, difficulties, doubts, and fears, and misgivings to him as such? What is the use of a map if we do not study it? What is the use of a chart to a sailor if he does not examine it? What is the use of a leader to the army if it does not refer to him? What is the use of a "counsellor" to us, except to aggravate our ruin, if we do not ask him to tell us the "way, the truth, and the life?"

But he is more than a Counsellor; he is also described as "the mighty God." No new translation has been attempted of this in order to do away with what is here plainly indicated in it—that Jesus is God. The epithet of the passage refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. It proves alone, were there no other passage in the Bible, that he is God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, 'the Mighty God.'" And mark what a strange mixture, "Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given," born with the mark of humanity; yet this same Child, this same Son, is the "Counsellor" of mankind, and, more than that, he is "the mighty God." Well, therefore, did Thomas say, "My Lord and my God." Well did Peter say, "To whom can we go but unto thee, thou hast the words of eternal life." Well did John say in his epistle

"He is the true God, and eternal life." And well do the angels in heaven say, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory, and honour, and thanksgiving, and praise."

But the fact that he is "the mighty God," communicates to us precious lessons. He is the Omnipotent God. All his truth has promised to bestow, his omnipotence is able to perform. Many men promise blessings from the benevolence—the overflowing benevolence—of their heart, but they are not able to perform them; but it is our glory and blessed comfort, that all that Christ has promised to do, because he is the Omnipotent One, he is able to do. He is mighty to *save*, for "he saves to the uttermost." "He is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day." The apostles speak constantly of our committing our souls to Christ, as to a faithful Shepherd. What a thing to know that we have committed our souls to One who cannot fail to take care of them, and who will not be wanting at the very moment we need him! The source of our consolation is this—that "he is able and willing to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day." Our souls cannot be committed to any creature—a creature's arm may fail, a creature's faithfulness may falter, but if we commit the precious soul, that is our everlasting all, to him that is able, as he has promised to defend it, then we may dwell in perfect peace, and so sure he will own us as his children at that day. Because he is "the mighty God," "his blood cleanseth from all sin." The blood of the greatest saint cannot cleanse the lost sinner from his sin; but because Jesus is "the mighty God," that is, because he is God as well as man, therefore, "his blood cleanseth from all sin."

Are we, my dear hearers, the subjects of this mighty Saviour? Have we committed our souls to him as to a faithful Shepherd? Do we lean upon him? Are we looking for everlasting acceptance through him? If so, we shall never be disappointed, that is absolutely certain. He is mighty to save, mighty to guide, and faithful to perform all the promises of his Holy Word."

He is spoken of next in this passage as "the everlasting Father." This is the only part of it that is not rightly translated. It ought to be, "the Father of the age to come," as Bishop Lough has shewn. The word Father is not applied to Jesus in the same way that it is applied to the first Person in the Holy Trinity; consequently, God is not called Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit Father. The word Father, is used here in the sense of a Source, Fountain, Author. Thus we read in Genesis, that he is "the Father of all such as handle the harp and organ;" that is, he is the founder of them. Again, we read, "I have been as a Father." That means, the source from which it flows; and so here, "The Father of the age to come," means that Christ is the creator, the governor, the beginning, the ending of them. The father of the age that is yet to come. The apostle speaks of the "world that is to be," or the age that is to come, so Jesus is called the Father, the Founder, the Author or Ruler of the ages to come; in other words, the blessedness of that age will not precede and bring in the advent of Christ, but Christ's advent first will precede the dawn of that predicted glory; in other words, it is not the millenium that introduces Christ, it is Christ that introduces the millenium; it is not the twilight that precedes

the sun, but it is the sun that originates the twilight. Christ the Son of righteousness arises, the millenium is the light of his beams, he comes first; the "age to be," is the result of his coming.

And lastly, he is called here "The Prince of Peace." Christ is the Prince of Peace. His object is defined by the apostle to be "Righteousness, peace and joy." We are said to be "justified by faith, to have peace with God." Again, the fruits of righteousness is said to be "Peace, and assurance for ever." He is said to give us the "Peace that passeth understanding;" peace in the conscience is the result of his office, peace in the nation is the fruits of his principles.

There cannot be peace in the world, except by the "Prince of peace." The question, whether war be right or wrong, is soon settled. Nobody doubts that war is bad; nobody doubts that war is to be deprecated; but the way to get rid of war is the question. One must not mix up two things, and say that those who cannot see that conventionalism will put an end to war, are persons that approve of the present mode of slaughter and bloodshed. This is not the fact. Every one must deprecate war and the sword; but the question is, how are we to get rid of it? We shall not get rid of it by men declaiming against it. If all the winds were voices, and used only to declaim against it, that would not put an end to war; or, if the whole nations were to agree not to go to war, it would simply declare the principle as a fact. But what is to cure this? We answer, the recognition of the law and jurisdiction of the Prince of peace. In other words, the gospel of Christ is the great prescription against civil and international war; and until that precept shall be uttered from sea to sea, and all the sceptres of the kings of the earth shall bow to the sceptre of the "Prince of peace," there will be "wars and rumours of wars," even unto the end. We are told expressly, that in this dispensation there will not be universal peace; and therefore an attempt to secure it without the "Prince of peace," is to try to give light without a sun—an effect, without its only appropriate, and suggestive, and productive cause; but, in proportion as the "Prince of peace" reigns in each individual heart, does he begin to reign throughout the world; and the true way, therefore, to put an end to war, is not to call meetings, nor to declaim against it, but it is to aid such institutions as Scripture Readers, City Missions, the circulation of the Bible, the diffusion of tracts and other documents that will enlighten man's mind and impress man's heart; and in proportion as you increase the number of true and devout Christians upon earth, in the same proportion do you decrease the possibility of the occurrence of national war. And until the "Prince of peace" shall sway the sceptre universally, there will not be national peace, or the superceding of national war among the nations of the world. The whole spring and source of the world's happiness is in the Bible; and he that makes one convert to the grace of God and Christianity, does more to promote universal peace, than he that makes the most eloquent speech that was ever uttered, against the horrors of war. It is very easy to speak grand things, to prophecy grand results, but never let us forget that one single building made upon earth, is better than twenty magnificent castles built in the air; one single man

brought to own and love the truth, to obey the "Prince of peace," is a greater contribution to peace than the grandest oration that was ever uttered by Demosthenes himself upon the horrors of war; or the most beautiful poem that was ever sung, upon the blessing and the glory of peace.

And now, having looked upon these characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ, let me repeat that this verse is what may be emphatically called *Christmas news*. These are the glad tidings that are suggestive of the recurrence of this day. It is not actually Christ's birth-day, for he was born three months later than this; but this has been established conventionally by men, throughout the nations of Christendom, as the day to commemorate the birth of Him who is the "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." What a joyful birth! What good news! How worthy the epithet! How blessed that day when Christ was born! Are they good news to you? The effect they produce is the measure of what they are to you. The very first effect of good news is to make you glad; and the next effect, and the way to test their goodness, is to make you thankful; and the next effect, is to make them love Him who has loved them; and the result of the influence as a whole, will be, that our hearts shall rejoice; we shall break forth into songs of praise, and the whole of our life shall be a monument of the transforming influence of that love which loved us in our ruin in spite of our sins, and has reinstated us in the sublime and blessed relation of children, heirs of God, and of his Christ.

I ask, then, Do you count all but loss for the excellency of him? Can you say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace?" Can you say, "For me to live is Christ?" Can you say "to die must be great gain." Can you say, "It is by God that my expectation cometh?" If God, then, has done so much for us, in spite of our demerits, let us rejoice that we can do something to glorify him, and to give Christ to "see of the travail of his soul," by practical proof of that enjoyment of those blessings which we so largely and undeservedly enjoy; and if God has so given to us spiritual things, let us not hesitate to give others, not the less worthy, of our temporal things. Give a temporal expression to your gratitude for good Christmas news, by what is generally pronounced, proverbially for its generosity, Christmas liberality. May God bless his word. Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A Sermon,

PREACHED AT THE NATIONAL SCOTCH CHURCH, CROWN COURT,

BY THE REV. J. CUMMING, D.D.

ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1851.

"And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him."—GENESIS vii. 1.

WE are told, by another penman, that Noah built the ark "by faith;" that "by faith," he entered it; that he preached a righteousness that was the only title to salvation, and became himself, by faith, an "heir of the righteousness which is by faith." We are told in another page of Scripture, that Noah lived, and walked, and triumphed by faith. We are told in another page of Scripture, that he was "righteous—the only righteous of that generation;" and that because he was thus righteous, and "did according to all that God commanded him," he was saved from the judgment that overtook and overwhelmed the world. There is no more contradiction here, between the assertion that *faith* was all, by the one penman, and the assertion that his *righteousness* was all, by the other penman, than there is of contradiction between Paul, who says, "We are justified by faith," and James, who says, "We are justified by works;" for faith is the root and spring, out of which the "righteousness that is by faith,"—that is, sanctification of character and life, continually proceeds; and it was just because Noah lived by *faith*, that Noah's life was illustrated by *righteousness*; in other words, the faith of the gospel of Christ is not a solitary ascetic, that builds its cell and lives in it alone—but it is, on the contrary, the prolific parent of "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report." "To faith is added virtue, and to virtue brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." It is thus, then, that faith in the Christian's heart is the source of all good works, that adorn the Christian's life; and it is to illustrate the connexion between these two things, that I have selected the text for this morning's meditation. "Noah did according to all that God commanded him."

In illustrating this, I would observe, that good works are not stones added to faith, as if it were only a lower stone in the same structure, disconnected

from it, but inseparably belonging to it, already laid upon it; it is the fruit of the flower; the same vitality that is in the root is in the topmost bough; the tree bears fruit because it has life in it; and is, therefore, the symbol of the Christian, by faith, bringing forth fruits of righteousness, and not that of the building, in which one stone lays upon another, or answers, at least, with their character.

The difficulties in the way of Noah shew the faith that Noah must have had, and how truly it was by faith in God's word, that he surmounted all difficulties. I say, what would be those difficulties that must have presented themselves to Noah's mind, when he heard first the things that God was about to do? He might have thought within himself, "Surely God will not be so severe; I have thought him a loving, affectionate, and kind Father, and I think it is impossible for him to bring so terrible a judgment." He might have argued as the serpent argued, "Ye shall not surely die; God did this merely as a threat, which he does not mean to execute; therefore, I will not make so vast a preparation for what, in all probability, will not occur at all." And the reasoning of the enemies of God must have occurred to Noah as startling. Some of the scientific men of his day said to him, no doubt, "Where will sufficient water be found? How will such a mass of water be lifted from the depth of the sea, and made to overflow the highest hill? Beside, supposing God does bring this flood, which you say he will bring about, then we shall find shelter in some spots where it will not reach, or set afloat some vessels, in which we shall be safe; and therefore we will not enter the ark, nor believe your testimony, nor accept your proposals." Now the only answer that Noah could give was this—"Thus saith the Lord, it shall be." Noah knew nothing of science; but he knew this—"Thus saith the Lord" made the world; "thus saith the Lord" maintains it; and "thus saith the Lord" is able to deduce into its pristine chaos, and do all he has positively predicted. So must it be my dear hearers, with us; we must not look at how a thing is possible, or how it should have been, or how it is possible it may be—but simply ascertain from that Book that speaks without error, what God has said, to know what his truth will do.

"Noah," we are told, "did all that God commanded him." He must have had great difficulties to encounter. He had not only the doubts and suspicions of his own heart to overcome, and the cavils and objections of his enemies' impiety, but the influence of his own personal feelings, that must have made him hesitate a little—"How can I build a vessel, seeing I have never lifted an axe before? And if that vessel is built, how shall I, not a sailor, navigate upon the tempestuous seas, without chart, without compass, without helm? And if I do so, how shall I induce all the beasts of the earth, the birds of the earth, and the creeping things, pair by pair, to enter into the ark?"

These things might have, no doubt did, array themselves in his imagination, and made him sometimes hesitate; but faith can think what others only dream of—it can say, what others only think—it can triumph, where others only attempt—and having, therefore, God's word, "*This shall be*," and God's command, "*This do ye*," Noah by faith did "all things whatsoever the Lord commanded him."

Hence, then, we learn that it was by faith that Noah set to work, and built

the ark, and prepared for the coming flood. That faith, we see, was crowned with triumphant results; and those that doubted God's word, disbelieved God's being, as well as the possibility of God's judgment, soon saw that "the old fanatic," as they proclaimed him to be, had entered into his ark—was the true and faithful prophet, when "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," and all nature, as if rising in wrath against humanity, pour its terrible artillery upon him. Those that derided him as a fanatic, accepted him as a father; those that expelled him from society, now were almost ready to worship him;—and the greatest sceptics are invariably, in the hour of approaching danger, the greatest cowards—they turned from utter derision to worship him as a very deity.

We read, then, as another part of what God commanded him, that he spoke to the four-footed beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and all creeping things, and summoned them into the ark. No doubt he feared this was an impossible thing; but no sooner had he opened his mouth, and uttered God's command, than instantly all animated things are seen to obey him: and this seems to be the image—the ancient image of his Maker, which man had lost, again restored to Noah, on this occasion, to teach us that the best way to recover man's lost dominion over nature, is for man to recover God's image upon his own soul. Noah obeyed God—and all nature obeyed Noah; the highest servants of God will always be found to be the greatest sovereigns of nature around him. Do we not see traces of this in the fact that as nations grow in their Christian character, in the same ratio almost do they grow in all that ennobles, elevates, and exalts a country? Where is it you find the highest science, the purest literature, the noblest philosophy? Are not these plants that grow upon the soil, watered with the dews, and shone upon by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Where is it you find man the greatest sea-lord and land-lord? It is where Christianity has its fixed hold, and its transforming influence has been most thoroughly and most deeply felt. Hence we notice, in the present day, as I have observed in expositions from the New Testament, that just in proportion as a nation grows in its moral character, does it seem to recover its mastery over the animate and inanimate creation around; a foretaste, and pledge and earnest of that day that will come, when man shall have restamped upon him once more, the perfect image of his God, and nature once more shall recognise in him a sovereign and a lord. The reins were dropped when Adam fell—the reins will be re-placed in man's hand when the Second Adam comes. He lost his sovereignty by sin—he will regain his sovereignty by righteousness. The beasts obeyed Noah, and this is but a pledge that it will ultimately be so.

Another part of Noah's doing as God commanded him, was to "walk with God." We read in another passage, that Noah "walked with God;" this is a very beautiful expressive trait of Christian character. He walked safely, because he walked with God. Where God advanced, he moved, where God stood, he stood still, and thus walking with God rough places became smooth, difficulties disappeared, hills were removed, vallies were filled up, and all things became plain to him who felt that he was overshadowed by the power and inspired by the directing wisdom of the Almighty God.

My dear hearers, the course that we are to pursue still, is just the course which was trodden by the footsteps of Noah before us. We too, would walk with God; we too, would do what he commands, following his example, treading his footsteps, and listening to the word upon the right hand and upon the left, saying continually, "This is the way, walk ye in it." And then our last state will cross the valley of the shadow of death, and echo upon the shore of the everlasting "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Each act that Noah did in obedience to the Word of God was a victory, each step that Noah took in the course prescribed and pointed out by God, was an happiness to himself. Though they doubted God's Word, and preferred the conclusions of their own sceptic wisdom, perished; he that believed in the face of difficulties, in spite of plausible objections, the simple,—*"Thus saith the Lord,"* proved in the issue, the greatest philosopher, by being preserved alone a monument of this great fact, that one word of God is stronger than the pillars that sustain the universe itself.

When Noah had thus acted, when he had thus entered into the ark, and all things that God had predicted, and better than Noah had expected, were fulfilled, we read in the beautiful language of the 16th verse, that "God shut him in." What an exquisite touch is that single sentiment,—*"God shut him in!"* What a striking illustration, that he who begins our course must end it; that he who is the author of our salvation must also be its finisher. It was as necessary that God should shut that door as it was that God's prescription should open that door; it was as necessary that God should take care of Noah after he was in the ark, as it was that God should appoint that ark as a retreat of safety for Noah and his family. And my dear hearers, if the ark be in any sense a type of our blessed Lord, it is as necessary that God should keep us in the Saviour, as that he should place us in the Saviour. Our salvation is not complete by being placed in Christ, it is only complete by being kept in Christ. And we are told by the apostle, that "We are kept through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." And we are told by the Saviour himself, "I give unto them eternal life, and none shall be able to pluck them out of my hand." A Christian is not one who believes he is placed in Christ, and therefore ceases to lean and pray, and look by faith; but the Christian is one who feels that he must be kept in Christ by the hand that placed him there; and exercises a personal faith, and looks every day, and leans every moment upon the same arm that put him there, and feels at every step of his beautiful and happy progress, that unless God keep him, that first justified him, he could never see happiness and heaven. It is thus, then, that the Christian feels the necessity of ceaseless reliance upon God, and feels that he is safe, not from the strength of his faith, but from the pledges and promises of him that keeps him. When Noah was in that frail ark, he was safer than those that were in the strongest ships, that floated and tried to find shelter upon that tempestuous agitated ocean; he was safer not by the strength of his faith, but by the protection of his God. And, my dear hearers, we too, in Christ Jesus, are safe, not because our faith is so strong, but because his hold of us is so real. I have no doubt that when Noah sat in the ark, and heard the heavy rains descend upon the roof, he felt an agitating and convulsive shock; as the waves were sweeping by, and he saw the tops of the distant hills still uncovered, that he had many a fear, and was agitated by many a conflicting emotion, that even he would assuredly be engulfed amidst the tempestuous waters, but yet because his faith trembled, and his fears predominated, his safety was therefore not less sure. His safety was not the strength of his faith, but the promise and the protection of his God. And so the Christian may, in Christ Jesus his better ark, have many a fear, many a doubt, many a sore perplexity, many a questioning suspicion, but yet he is safe. The weakness of our faith does not affect the strength of our Saviour. We are saved not by the strength of our faith, but only in the

relationship,—the unchanging and unchanged relationship with him who is our refuge and our shelter, and our salvation, and all we need to keep us prosperous and progressive on earth, and to waft us across the floods and tempests, not on the bleak Ararat, again to come down upon a bleak dismantled earth, but on the everlasting hill of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Let me then notice the next point in Noah's obedience. That faith which Noah had, the fruits of which are manifested in the simple words, "Noah did all things whatsoever the Lord commanded him." The secret of our safety from the coming evils of the coming judgment, is faith in Christ, as truly, as really, as strictly, as the safety of Noah and his family from the deluge was entering into the ark. I do not institute now a parallel between Christ and the ark which I have done before, but I would remark upon this point that our safety from the coming judgment is just the same with reference to Christ, as that Noah's safety from the coming deluge was in reference to that ark which he entered, and in which he dwelt.

What is this faith then of ours, which is to us the element of such confidence? I answer, faith is defined by the apostle to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is not the mere subscription of a creed however orthodox, it is not a mere enthusiastic conviction that all is right with you; it is not a blind credulity that accepts things with uncertain evidence; but it is a faith that is the inspiration of God's Spirit that accepts truths that are vouched to be truths by the signature they bear, and that entertains in its bosom a right and certain hopes, because these hopes are angel visitants from Him who alone can give man faith, and inspire man's heart with hope, and make him safe, and holy, and happy.

This faith is not an emotion so totally different from the original feelings of our mind that we can form no idea of it until we are changed by the Holy Spirit of God. Faith is in every man's bosom in reference to some things; for instance, the confidence of a battalion in a field of battle is in the veteran and experienced commander; the confidence of the crew is in the captain of the ship in a heavy gale and upon the tempestuous sea; the confidence of the merchant is in his far distant correspondent, whom he never saw in the flesh, but in whom he, nevertheless, has a perfect implicit confidence. All these are faith in the sphere of the human; the faith which is saving is a transference of the same emotion inspired by the Spirit of God into the sphere of the divine and the eternal. Thus, then, faith in Christ Jesus is an emotion that we all have some idea of. Society hangs together by the reciprocal exercise of it. The exhaustion of it from the world of mankind would be the exhaustion of that cement that keeps it together, and saves it from disorganisation and moral chaos.

Now it is only the transference of the confidence in the soldier of the army, in the captain of the ship, and in the distant merchant unto Him who is the King of kings, and the Captain of our salvation, in whom trust may be placed implicitly, and in whose word confidence may lean its weight, and not fear that one jot or tittle shall pass away until all shall be fulfilled. It is thus, then, that faith in Christ Jesus is an emotion that we are not strangers to; and that inspired by his Holy Spirit comes to be a saving grace justified by which we have peace with God.

What a blessed fact is it, my dear hearers, that God has placed our salvation on faith. A babe can trust in its mother for nutriment and safety, though it cannot reason; and many a man and many a woman can trust in God's word when they cannot reason out the *why* or the *wherefore* of it. For instance, had man's salvation been dependent on laborious study and great learning, what would become of the young, the illiterate, the masses of mankind? If God had said you must become a great scholar in order to get to heaven, what would become of the poor and the illiterate? If anything we could do could get us to heaven—by being a mere scholar, or scientific discoverer, there would

be something in which to glory, there would be a merit in that; but when God says that the mere scholar and the illiterate are both saved simply by believing the word of the eternal God, then there is nothing in that in which man can glory. It is no credit to a man to believe a credible witness; you never heard a person say there was; nor is there in simply believing the simple testimony of the truth-telling God. It takes away, nips at the bud, all possibility of self-glory or self-righteousness, or merit of any kind. Thus it is we are saved by faith, saved by faith in God, that no man may glory; saved by faith that no flesh may despair; saved by faith that the scholar may not say "My learning did it, and therefore I can glory in that;" saved by faith that the poorest and most illiterate may not despair. We are saved in such a way that the loftiest and the poorest upon earth must believe in order to be saved; we are saved in such a way that the worst of mankind must believe in order to be saved. There is no malady too deep for the hand of Christ to save and pluck the victim from it; and there is no authority so elevated that goes beyond the range of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is thus we have in faith that which takes away all possibility of merit, that which makes the gospel scheme so simple and intelligible, that which encourages a man to take the highest prospect of glory, to believe in Jesus Christ, and that believing in him to have life through his name.

Yet this scheme of mercy, this mode of saving sinners, is not a plan that encourages, in the least degree, the licentiousness of the human heart. It is not true that justified by faith we are thereby absolved from all the obligations of God's unchangeable, holy, and everlasting law. The best proof that the greatest believers have ever been the greatest doers is just the record of the past. It was by faith that Noah was saved; and yet the character of Noah was so righteous, so spotless, and his conduct so unimpeachable. It was by faith that Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and yet Enoch's life was characterised by ceaseless walking with God. And thus it has been from the record of the lives of sainted men, that they who maintained and insisted upon faith as the most vital and essential grace in the christian character, were just the very men who were characterised by all the fruits of the Spirit, and "added to their faith virtue, and to virtue godliness, and to godliness charity, and to charity brotherly kindness." Faith in Noah, we see, was the source of Noah's obedience to God; faith in Abraham was the secret of his going out, he knew not whither, in obedience to the mandate of God; and the reason why faith is ever so holy in its fruits is that the same faith that believes in the Saviour's atoning blood believes in the necessity of the promised possession of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power; the same heart that is open to receive Christ as the atonement, is, in that opening, made ready to receive the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. No true christian believes that Christ came to canonize the works of the devil; but every true christian does believe that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; in other words, that divine grace saves us *not in* our sins, but saves us *with* our sins, saves us *out of* and *from* our sins, their curse, and their dominion, and their power. Read the roll of the illustrious dead in the eleventh of Hebrews, every one of whose names is like the sound of a trumpet, spirit-stirring, and full of power, and you will there see it was they who were signalised by the most childlike faith, men characterised by the most beautiful ennobling fruits of christian character, as that character is portrayed in so few words. It is thus, then, we see how consistent it is that one who, by faith, believed God's testimony, did, through the inspiration of that faith, all that God commanded him to do.

There is another reason why faith is so very precious. It is that grace that turns constantly to God, leans on him, watches for the expression of his will, sits at his feet, is ever ready to go forth and do what he bids. This faith is the leaning of weakness upon Omnipotence, the finite on the Infinite, of ignorance upon Wisdom, and of sin upon that rich mercy that is pledged and promised

to wash it all away. Faith is to the christian the attraction that draws him constantly to God, the pulsating and vital cord along which God's love comes down to us, in the merits of which, therefore, we are replaced and reinstated in that union and communion with God which we lost by sin, and is restored only by the gospel of Christ.

It is a very beautiful arrangement, very delightful to us, that this faith is the resting not upon anything beneath him. If you had faith in a man, or in a king, or in the princes of the earth, it is in something not better than yourself; but the grand provision of the gospel is, that your trust shall be exercised in one who is higher, holier, and infinitely better than yourself. You shall approximate to One that is infinitely just, and infinitely good; you shall lean upon One who is greater than yourself; and leaning upon whom, you are glorified, dignified, and strengthened. If an oak of two or three hundred years were to lean upon a plant of a few years, it would be absurd, inconsistent; but it is the weak plant of a few years that leans upon the stronger of many centuries. The Christian leans upon the Tree of life, derives his nutriment from it, and is strengthened, not in his own strength, but in its strength; he is sheltered from the storms, not by his own help, but by its help; and for his safety, for his nutriment, and his protection, Christ the Tree of life is his All and in all. Thus it is, that where there is simple faith, there is the fruits of active obedience.

We see next the influence that Noah's faith had; all his family were blessed because he believed. What an interesting and instructive lesson is in this simple verse! that our families are blessed in the ratio in which the heads of those families lean on, and take direction from God. It is a law impressed upon the history of the world, that when the heads of nations do what is lawful and right, the meanest subjects of that nation has the divine protection. It is a law of the domestic circle, that a parent, fearing God, living on him, receiving direction from him like a Divine Conductor, draws down blessings from the skies upon those around and beneath him. "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for *thee*,"—not all thy house—but for "*thee* have I seen righteous before me." What an inducement this for all that are in authority, for them that have great power to seek; and to be sure that they are inspired and directed by Almighty grace! Whether we approve it or not, it is a law of nations, it is the testimony of God, that subordinates of families are blessed because their heads and governors live in the fear of Him by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice."

In the next place, my dear hearers, let me establish a practical lesson from the whole of this simple narration, that coming years may be to us like the waters that swept the antediluvian race. Many a time have I stated what now is the impression in the minds of most of you, that not a year that comes can be a pledge that the next will be one of national, or universal, or European prosperity, progress, happiness, and peace. Take the last six, or seven, or ten years; why every year in succession has been an epoch; some startling phenomenon has characterised it; and what these have been, the coming years will be more still, for as time gets shorter, events will be crowded into them the more; and these events will strike a peal with more startling emphasis upon the nations and the history of mankind. Perhaps in a year or two the whole foundations of our social system may be broken up, the great deep of society stirred up, and strange elements may be opened, and the highest pinnacle and mountain of human grandeur and human greatness may be overthrown by a more terrible flood than has ever swept the earth. 1852 will only be another point in that progression into which we are now rushing. Are we, in the prospect of this year, in the true ark? Have we entered by faith unto the Son of God? It is not, my dear hearers, calculating what may be, or casting what may be, or even acquaintance with unfulfilled prophecy, however valuable, that will shelter and save us; our safety is in the ark, our shelter is in the Son of

God; and if we, by a living, personal, individual trust, are this day looking to his precious blood as the only absolution from our sins, and looking to his Holy Spirit as the only Sanctifier and Comforter, then, come flood, come fire, come the breaking up of all ancient citadels, come the crashing and overturning of all great dynasties; let the windows of heaven pour down judgment, and the responsive deeps of society break open and pour forth their contents; yet "we have a river whose streams make glad the city of our God: God is her Refuge and Strength."

Go, my beloved, in the prospect of 1852, 3, and 4, and their successive years; enter into thy closet, shut thy door about thee, hide thee for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. Is this your shelter — is this your refuge? Let every man examine himself and try himself; let us ascertain where our trust is, what our hope at this moment is, in the prospect of the future; where we stand now in the present. Noah preached to thousands who would not hear him; let not the minister of the gospel preach to you and find you also sceptical. They perished temporally, we perish by neglecting the great salvation eternally. Christ himself preaches to us, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And if we are in that ark, my hearers, however minute, however insignificant in the social scale, God can no more forget us than he can forget himself. What a blessed fact is it that He who remembered Noah in the ark, watched every wave, meted out every wind, directed its course, and landed it on Ararat, is as truly taking care of the poorest Christian on the waves of this ocean, as if he were the only person in the universe of God! "The mother may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yet will I not forget thee; I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hand, and will have thee in everlasting remembrance." "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee. Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires."

Again, then, my dear hearers, let me ask, are you in Christ the true Ark? Do you trust in him for eternal things, for everlasting things, for spiritual things, as much as the soldier trusts in his colonel, as much as the merchant trusts in his correspondent, as much as the sailor trusts in the captain of the vessel? Do you trust as truly, as really, as enthusiastically in reference to the soul and the soul's safety, and the soul's happiness in Christ Jesus, the only Ark that will save, and sanctify, and preserve you? This is a simple question, but it is a vital one; and "we beseech you as in Christ's stead, that ye be reconciled to God;" "for he has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." May he bless his word for his name sake. Amen.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE STRINGENCY OF THE LAW SHUTTING UP TO THE
GRACE OF THE GOSPEL.

A Sermon,

PREACHED IN DR. BURDER'S CHAPEL, HACKNEY,

BY THE REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.,

(OF GLASGOW,)

ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 30, 1851.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—JAMES ii. 10.

WE are ready to exclaim, "This is a hard saying—who can hear it?" It is a divine saying, however; proved to be so by all the evidence that establishes the inspiration of this Book. The very terms of the saying are such as to impress us with the conviction that it is one of no light import,—that it must bear weightily on our responsibility as moral agents—subjects of the government of God. Let it be our endeavour, then,

First, to explain and justify the principle which the text expresses. And then, Secondly, to apply the principle, thus explained and vindicated, to the rectification of some prevalent mistakes of pernicious practical tendency.

I.—We are to EXPLAIN AND VINDICATE THE PRINCIPLE WHICH THE TEXT EXPRESSES.

I here assume that by "*the whole law*" is meant the moral law, in all its precepts, whether of requirement or of prohibition. It is true, that in the immediately preceding verses the apostle speaks of "the Royal law," as he designates it, the law of love. But this one precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is ever explained as comprehensive of all the precepts in detail, of the second table of the law. Thus writes Paul, (Romans xiii. 9,) "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" And when, in the text, James speaks not of "*the law*" merely, but of "*the whole law*," and of transgressing it in *one* of its points, and then, in the following verse, specifies two of those points—the prohibition of adultery and murder—it must be obvious that he has before his mind the law, not in its concentrated principle of love, but in its detail of practical precepts, which, as their principle, that love includes.

Nos. 13 & 14.

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It would be an insult to your understandings, to set about proving that the text is not to be interpreted *literally*; that is, as meaning that the man who practically breaks one of the precepts of the law, practically breaks all the rest. This would not only be a contradiction to common sense, but a contradiction to the very terms of the text itself;—where the case supposed is that of a man *keeping* all the rest of the law, and “*offending in one point*”—and where the further case subjoined for illustration is that of one who though he “*kills*,” “*commits no adultery*”—breaking, in practice, the *sixth* commandment, but not the *seventh*.

There are two modes of expression used, which call for explanation, in order to our clearly ascertaining the principle of the text. The one is, that “*offending in one point*,” constitutes a man “*a transgressor of the law* ;” the other is the more startling proposition, that such single offence brings him in “*guilty of all*.” With regard to the former, there is little difficulty. The law, though consisting of various precepts, is *one*. It is given throughout by the same Lawgiver; and throughout it is alike binding. He who violates any one of its precepts, violates the law. As the transgression of any precept, is a transgression of the law, so is the transgressor of any precept a transgressor of the law. This is plain enough. The principle is practically recognised in *human* legislation, as well as *divine*. To constitute any man a transgressor of the law of his country, it is not necessary that he break *all* its precepts—it is enough that he break *any one* of them. The thief is punished as a transgressor, though he has not committed murder; and the murderer is executed, though he has not been a robber. All understand this. The whole of the *divine law* is armed by *one sanction*. The violation of any part of it incurs the curse which it denounces. Hence the apostle Paul says—“*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the law to do them*.” By *one act* of disobedience, the first man constituted himself *a transgressor*. He lost his innocence. He stood that moment guilty and condemned before his Maker. And the nature of the sin committed by him strikingly shewed, and without doubt was intended to shew, *wherein sin consisted*; what was its true *principle* or *element*; namely, not *the thing done*; for there could, in itself, be nothing moral or immoral in the eating of one description of fruit more than of another, but *the violation of God’s authority* in the doing of it. “*Sin is the transgression of law*.”

Let us now notice the other affirmation, the one more directly contained in our text—that the man who transgresses in “*one point*,” is “*guilty of all*.” We have seen what this does not mean—what then does it mean?

Something might be said for interpreting the phrase as equivalent—that is, of the same meaning—with the former. The illustrative case, in the eleventh verse, is introduced to explain and confirm the statement of the tenth—“*He is guilty of all*; for He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” He had become a transgressor of that law by which adultery was prohibited as well as murder. Though no adulterer, he was a transgressor of *the law which prohibited adultery*; and since the same thing

might also be said of disobedience to parents, of theft, of false witness-bearing, of coveting, and of every other forbidden act, he was in *this* sense, "*guilty of all*;" of violating *the law* by which *all* were prohibited.

While this may be regarded as, substantially, what is meant, the three following observations may serve to bring out more clearly and fully the *principle* involved in our text. It is obvious—

1. That *the same authority* is sinned against in the breach of *one* precept, as in the breach of *all*. The authority which enacted "the whole law," accompanies, in its full force, every single precept of it. The entire weight of that authority—I was about to say *the highest authority in the universe*—but it is properly *higher than the highest*; it is not an authority *in* the universe, but *above* it. The universe is *created*; and the very highest created authority is infinitely beneath that of the Creator—that of God. The entire weight of *this* authority is in every command and every prohibition of the law. Were a man transgressing, successively, all the precepts of that law, he would never come to violate a new authority. Were it in any case new, it must be inferior, seeing superior there is none; but in every case it is the same, and in every case the highest—that of the infinite God. The man, therefore, who breaks one precept of God's law goes the utmost length he can go, in so far as respects the *authority* he disregards, the restraint he breaks through. He can never disregard a higher, he can never set at nought and break through a stronger.

Such, indeed, is the illustration of the principle in the text given in the verse which follows—"For HE WHO SAID thou shalt not commit adultery, SAID ALSO thou shalt not kill." He who said the one said the other; it is in either case *the same authority*. Observe, then,

2. The *spirit* or *principle of disobedience* manifested, is, in all cases the same. The principle of one sin is the principle of another, and of every sin. The principle of all obedience is contained in the first of the two great commandments in which the law is summed up—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. Each command of God is rightly and acceptably obeyed, just in proportion as obedience to it is dictated and influenced by this love. All transgressions spring from, and indicate the want, the negation, the opposite of this love. The entire law may justly be considered as summed up and concentrated in this one great spiritual precept; so that when the principle inculcated in this spiritual injunction is violated, the *entire law* is violated, being broken in its all-comprehending principle. This may appear the more clearly when it is considered,

3. The violation of *one* precept indicates a *state of mind* such as only requires a *variation in the nature and circumstances of the tempting inducement* to produce the violation of *another*. The habitual indulgence in one transgression makes it manifest that abstinence from others is not the effect of the right principle; for, if it were, the same principle would operate in restraining also from it.

I have said the *habitual indulgence* in any transgression; because, although the principle just stated is, to a certain extent, true of every *single act* of trespass, yet it has its force of application especially to *courses of action*—to

indulged sins. You must at once be sensible, that the indulgence of any one sin shows a decided want of the principle of true subjection to God and to his law. Were that principle, I repeat, in due operation, it would keep him who is influenced by it from *this* indulgence as well as from others. Some of you may be apt to conclude—then it ought to keep from *all* sin; and we shall have the doctrine of *sinless perfection*. But the conclusion would be a hasty one. I have not said that in any of God's people the *principle* is *perfect*: that it ought to be so in them and in all, is a truth, a moral truth; but this is a very different thing from the question of *fact*—whether in any it *is* thus perfect? The Bible says *no*, when it affirms (and the affirmation is confirmed by many more to the same effect) that “there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” One of the strongest expressions to the contrary is that which occurs in 1 John iii. 9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” By interpreters generally this is understood of his not *practising* sin—giving sinful principles such *indulgence* as we have just been speaking of. The second and stronger of the two expressions, “*he cannot sin*,” being usually *supplemented*, so as to render it consistent with such a view of the meaning—“he cannot *thus* sin,”—or, “he cannot *habitually* or *wilfully* sin.” I am disposed to think, however, that *here* the words may, and ought to be, taken in their unqualified and literal import. They seem to me to be meant as expressing the *sinless* character and influence of the principles of the *new nature* imparted by the regenerating Spirit of God to those of whom John is here speaking—those who are “*born of God*.” In so far as the principles of this new nature are concerned, there *is* no sin—there *can be* no sin, either in themselves or in what they produce. He who is “born of God *cannot sin*.” It is a birth *from God*, and it corresponds in character to the character of the divine Father—it is *sinless*. There can no more be sin, or sinful tendency in any of the principles thus introduced into the soul when it is made spiritually “alive unto God,” than there could be sin, or sinful tendency, in the principles of that nature which was given to man originally; for what is the new birth, but just the restoration of the principles of that nature? Whence, then, comes any sin in the children of God? The answer is, not from their *new* nature, but from the remains in them of the *old*. The introduction of the new is not the annihilation of the old; it is the introduction of an antagonist power, which, though not alone, is ascendant, bears the rule: the old remains, to be striven against and crucified; “the flesh lusting against the spirit.” But the new has the predominance over the old; *such* predominance, that it is *by it* the man is now *distinguished*; it forms, by its decided and manifest superiority of influence, *his character*, that by which he is *known*—the *I*, the *me*. It is on this principle that the apostle is to be understood when he says, “It is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” The “*I*” means the person speaking, *as characterised and known by his dominant principles*. When he did, at any time, that which was evil, it was not *HE*, the spiritual man—the new man, as distinguished by the great presiding and governing principles of his character—that did it, it was “sin,” the remains of corruption still “dwelling

in him;" it was not *Paul*, it was the remnant of what had been *Saul*. When he sinned he acted *unlike himself*;—so that we might even more strongly, and as nearly as possible, express the apostle's sentiment by saying, *he was not himself* when he said that. And if such should be our impression and our saying, even as to occasional and incidental sins, when speaking of any partaker of the new nature, any one "born of God;" it cannot but follow that the habitual or wilful and frequent commission of any known sin must prove the *absence* of that new nature, showing sufficiently that the person, be his profession what it may, has *not* been "born of God." The sentiment of John, and the sentiment of Paul, if I mistake not, are in spirit and substance the same.

II. Having thus briefly explained the principle of the text, let me now, in the *second* place, APPLY THAT PRINCIPLE TO THE RECTIFICATION OF SOME PREVALENT MISTAKES, OF PERNICIOUS PRACTICAL TENDENCY.

And here let me notice, first of all, a strange notion which, among many other strange notions, the product of the self-sufficient wisdom and self-righteous presumption of the Jewish Rabbis, is said to have prevailed in those days—namely, that God had given so many commandments to men, that by doing *any* one of them they might be saved. In other words, that they should single out some one commandment of God's law, and therein specially exercise themselves; that so they might make God their Friend by that, lest in others they should too much displease him. "He that so observes any one precept," said these "blind leaders of the blind," "it shall be well with him, and his days shall be prolonged, and he shall inherit the earth." The apostle James is thought by some to have had his eye—when he wrote as in our text—on this preposterously foolish and wicked delusion; in following out which, as might have been anticipated, the precepts selected for special observance were—not the "weightier matters of the law," its holy moral requirements, but its ceremonial externalities—"I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The existence of such a dogma shews two things: The strong hold which the self-righteous principle—the desire to have in themselves their recommendation to the divine favour—has on the minds of men; and, closely connected with this, the slightness and flimsiness of the grounds on which men do flatter themselves with their possessing such self-recommendation. Among the pharisees, the religious devotees of our Lord's time, the externalities, the fasts, and tithes, and bodily ablutions, and long prayers, were the coverings of wickedness, the gilding and lacquering of corruption, the whitening of the sepulchre, that was within "full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." What a proof, amongst innumerable more, of the truth of the divine verdict on the heart of man, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

But come:—let us see whether we may not find something analagous to this very principle, working—aye, and working extensively and mightily—amongst ourselves. You may find men who, while they will smile at the matchless absurdity of the principle, when put into formal expression as we have re-

presented the Jewish doctors putting it, are yet, after all, themselves holding and acting on it.

For example:—To begin with a case of a *general* complexion: how sadly common it is for men, to overlook the whole of the *first* table of the law, and to look only to precepts of the *second*; to leave out of their account, in their estimate of character, the claims of God, and satisfy themselves with those of their fellow-men. I have had it said by an infidel to myself, "There are very good things in the Bible, I grant; such as, that 'we should love our neighbours as ourselves,' and 'do to others as we would have others do to us.'" Now, how comes it, that we never hear such men say, There are very good things in the Bible, such as, that we should "love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind." This commandment has precedence of the other. Why is it overlooked? Why are persons satisfied with giving *men* their due, while they feel no conscious guilt in failing to give *God* his due? Why do they forget, that, apart from the heart's subjection to the first of the two commands, there can be no right or duly principled obedience rendered to the second? Ah! what can account for this, but the *ungodliness* of the human heart—but the truth of the Bible testimony, "The carnal mind is enmity against God?" It is choosing among God's commands—choosing, too, the less in preference to the greater, and presumptuously fancying that for disobedience to the greater, obedience to the less will compensate. And if "he that offends in one point is guilty of all," that man surely must be thus guilty who offends in the first and highest point of all.

But, passing from this *general* exemplification, there are others more *special*, having reference to the different precepts of the *second table itself*.

Nothing is more common, for instance, than for men to plume themselves on those virtues, those qualities of character, that are specially needful, and are held by others in special estimation, *in their respective callings*. How often—how very often—do we find men, in the estimate of their own, and one another's characters,—especially, of course, their own—fastening upon these professional virtues, boasting of them, trusting in them, challenging all to find a flaw in their practice of them, and so making what constitutes their reputation in the social and business world, the foundation of their confidence towards God. Yes, and even while they cherish such self-complacency, making those particular virtues the compensation for many a fault, and even for vices of no light and venial enormity; and especially for the absence of every thing in heart and life, that is expressed by the Bible word *godliness*. Is a man a *servant*? there are expected of him *honesty, sobriety, fidelity, diligence*; these, with one or two more of a kindred description, form the sum of his virtues. Is a man in business? he plumes himself on his high honour, and unimpeachable integrity and justice, in all his transactions. He detests all mean, dirty, double-dealing, and holds with the poet that "An honest man's the noblest work of God." And in the world's sense he is an honest man—who can question it? He looks no farther—*that* is his righteousness; and the "scape-goat" for many a sin, both of omission and of commission, against other parts of the divine law. Is the man a *soldier*? he may be ever so profligate; but if he exemplifies

a soldier's characteristic virtues, if he shews courage in the field, that never flinches, a preference of honour to life, and a spirit of loyal and patriotic self-devotion in the service of his sovereign and country, he feels himself all that a *soldier* should be, and therefore fancies himself all that as a *man* he should be. And thus we might go over all other stations and professions in life. Now, is not this very near akin to the rabbinical principle just mentioned? the principle of selection among the virtues, and of compensating the deficiency or the absence of some by the strict practice of others?

Again :—There are certain virtues, *not* of a professional description, which are very general favourites in this way. I may specify *two*. The first is *charity*. Charity, I mean, not in the Bible sense of the term, where it is the equivalent for *love*, but in its more ordinary acceptation of *almsgiving*. But, although it is not in the Bible sense of the term, it is often by Bible authority that the delusive reliance on it is vindicated. Does not the Bible say, "*Charity shall cover the multitude of sins?*" It does; but in no sense such as that which you attach to the words. Will you just look at the passage where they occur in the New Testament, and at that in the Old from which they are quoted. The two passages are in 1 Peter iv. 8, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins," and Prov. x. 12, "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins." The comparison settles the import at once. There is, in the interpretation put upon the unconnected sentence—"Charity shall cover the multitude of sins"—a twofold blunder; first, as to what charity *is*; and, secondly, as to what charity *does*. Charity *is*—not almsgiving, but *love*; though almsgiving may at times be one of its modes of operation: it is *love*—"have fervent love among yourselves." And then, what this charity *does*, is not, either by almsgiving or any other of its practical manifestations, the covering of sins from the avenging justice of God; but, as the antithesis between the influence of hatred and that of love, in the text of Solomon makes strikingly apparent, the throwing of the veil of concealment over the faults of others—"Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins." Instead of meaning almsgiving, this book teaches us that it is a grace of which the man who "gives all his goods to feed the poor" may yet be destitute. Few delusions, however, are more common in the world, than the confidence in this one virtue of which I now speak. The man, of charity—the humane, kind, benevolent man—who pities the poor and the distressed, and gives freely for their supply and relief, looks confidently for heaven as the reward of his deeds and gifts of beneficence. Every penny, every shilling, every pound is part purchase money, paid in advance. He cherishes this confidence, even although the whole of his general deportment otherwise shews him to be an ungodly man, destitute of any principle of true piety, and indulging, too, it may be, in sins which, according to the most explicit assurances of this book, shut the door of them out of the kingdom of heaven.

The other of the two virtues I had in my eye is,—*sincerity*. The efficacy ascribed to this virtue, both on men's own behalf, and one another's, is quite amazing. You may find men making as much of it in giving their consciences peace, and keeping up their hearts before God, as if it were an understood

and established maxim in divine morality, that sincerity in evil took the evil away—was a satisfactory compensation for the doing of it. How many irreligious and even licentious men may you hear say, they have one consolation at least, (and from the manner in which they say it, it seems as if it were no small one, a source of no little self-elation,) that at any rate no one can call them *hypocrites*. They are at least *honest*; and *that*, they are ready to alledge, is more than can be said of some who profess greater things. Many such professors, they add, with a smile of sarcastic satisfaction, are *no better than they should be, that is certain*. For their part, they make no such pretensions. And *hypocrisy*, they think and call, and curse it as they speak, the *basest of all sins*. And they are right; so it is. This meanest and vilest of all attributes of character they are free from. And this one *negation* goes far to constitute the ground of their self-complacency and reckless trust. Oh! how their hearts swell with this secret self-satisfaction, when, among the ranks of the professors of religion, one discovers himself to have been wearing it as a cloak! 'Tis marrow to their bones. "Ah! that's the way!—canting hypocrites!—how many more should we find of the same kidney, did we but know them a little better." And they flatter themselves, as if their making *no profession* of religion were quite enough to release them from the *obligations* of religion; as if religion were merely an optional thing; as if what they did not choose to *profess* they were not bound to *be*; as if the absence of *pretension* would atone for the absence of the *reality*; as if detected hypocrisy in *others* were a valid excuse for ungodliness in *them*.

Miserable delusion! Just look for one moment at the principle of it; and test it by a very simple application of it to human relations. Take that of *parent and child*. Suppose a child were to say:—"I am no hypocrite: I see many children who are vastly affectionate, ever talking of their fondness for their father and mother, ever fawning, and caressing, and making great protestations, and great promises, who, to my knowledge, laugh at them, and disobey them, and follow their own will and their own way, whenever their backs are turned. I repeat it,—I am no such hypocrite. I make no such professions of love and subjection. I take my own way, and I do it openly. No one shall ever charge me with mean and pitiful dissembling; with saying one thing and doing another." How does *this* sound? How would it do, as an apology for filial unnaturalness and insubordination? Would any parent sustain the plea? Would any man of right feeling or common sense sustain it? And will the plea be held of avail for disobedience to God, that is scouted for its worthlessness, and reprobated for its baseness, when urged in extenuation of disobedience to man? Shall it satisfy men as to the breach of the higher obligation, even the very highest of all, when it is rejected as to the breach of the lower? O beware of the delusion. The obligation to be religious lies upon you, independently of all profession. It is not your duty to *profess religion* without *being religious*: but it is your duty,—your very first duty, a duty from which nothing whatever, unless it be the loss of your reason, can release you, both to *be* religious, and to *profess* what you *are*.

Still further:—There is another common principle, nearly the reverse of the

former one, (for on this subject, there is no end to human inconsistency)—that *general obedience* will be a set-off against the indulgence of *particular sins*. You will, at once, see how thoroughly such a sentiment is in antipodes to that of our text. Think, for a moment, what the *principle* must be, by which that man is actuated, who fancies that he may compromise for the gratification of one lust,—the indulgence of one evil propensity, by his general abstinence from others :—that he may procure by such abstinence a dispensation for such indulgence. What is it? Does he not, in reality abstain from sin *for the sake of sin*? Is not the *love of sin* actually, in such a case, the very principle of his seeming obedience? He obeys in some points, that he may have licence to trespass in others! The very object of his external performance of some duties, and his external abstinence from some sins, is, that he may have ease and freedom in the sin which he likes to indulge; thus to pacify, and keep quiet, and bribe over his conscience, if not to approbation, to silence, in gratifying a favourite desire. It is wonderful how far this delusion goes. First of all, men have their favourite lusts,—desires which they are most prone to indulge,—“sins that most easily beset them.” From others they find little if any difficulty in abstaining. The abstinence requires no great effort of self-denial, as they have no particular propensity to their indulgence. These sins they freely and strongly condemn, and reprobate, and load with malediction. And they flatter themselves that on this ground, their single indulgence may be held as somewhat venial, and be overlooked, or remitted. Thus, in terms which may be thought hardly consistent with the dignity of the place whence I speak, but which are so strikingly descriptive of the species of self-delusion under notice, that I must be excused for the use of them,—they

“Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By cursing those they have no mind to.”

—But in all they do, or abstain from doing, there is *no principle*: there is no sacrifice, no self-denial, no crucifying of the flesh, no striving against sin. If there is a principle at all, it is, as I have said, a bad one. It is not, remember, in abstaining from those evils to which there is no particular propensity, that *principle* is tried: it is in abstinence from those which it requires self-restraint and self-denial to resist.

But the delusion goes still further. Men actually plume and value themselves on the absence of sins which they *have not the power to commit*. There are courses of sin which bodily constitution, state of health, regard to earthly connexions, outward circumstances, worldly interests, do not admit of a man's following. But, instead of ascribing his abstinence from such courses to its real cause, he makes a virtue of necessity, and, on the credit of such abstinence, takes liberties in other directions; forgetting that when he makes such a use of his abstinence, to give him encouragement in other sins, the principle of the abstinence is the very same with the principle of the indulgence. It is *the love of the sin*.

Thus, too,—in regard to sins which are, in their nature *opposites*, and which, consequently, it is naturally impossible to combine in the same character,

impossible to practise together; the delusion of which I speak goes even so far as to tempt a man to think well of himself, for not practising the opposite of the one which he is at the time indulging. Thus it is, for example, with the miser and the spendthrift. It is impossible, in the nature of things, for a man to be both. And yet the miser glories in his not being a spendthrift, and the spendthrift in his not being a miser. Each looks upon the other as incomparably worse than he is himself; and, because he is not the one, he trusts he may be forgiven for his being the other.

These are a few, and but a few, of the delusions by which men seek to satisfy their consciences, and evade the condemnatory sentence of the divine law; delusions based on principles at perfect contrariety to that of our text. How strange it is! how passing strange! How eager men are to find merit, and title to divine favour, in themselves! *Anything but submission to the Gospel!* Nay, that very gospel they pervert, and try to bring it into conformity with their own self-justifying pride; pretending that the design of it is to reduce the demands of the law; to bring them more within the compass of human ability; to keep them to do away with the principle of our text, and render sincere obedience, though imperfect, the ground of man's acceptance with God.

The principle of this widely prevalent delusion, you will at once perceive, is in the very teeth of our text. Our text, in the strongest form of affirmation possible, assures us that nothing short of perfect sinless obedience to God's law can justify any one of its subjects. And on this point the whole Bible is in harmony with the text—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." "By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified." The delusion is at once an impious and a foolish one. It is *impious*. The moral principles and requirements of God's law are no more capable of reduction and change than the moral attributes of God's character. You may as well talk of a change in God, as of a change in his law. Holiness and love are the elements of his moral nature; holiness and love are the characteristics of his moral law. What it was once right in him to require, it must be right in him to require always. To imagine that because the creature has become corrupt—because man has lost his original love of God and godliness—the law of God must be accommodated to that corruption—must be let down in its requirements to meet the sinful creature's disinclination to keep it—is not a less impious imagination than it would be to say that God must divest himself of his holiness because his creature has divested himself of his;—that God must become like man, because man has ceased to be like God. No, my hearers; it cannot be. God cannot change, and neither can his law. While the one remains what He is, so must the other remain what it is—"the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." And the delusion is as *foolish* as it is impious. It throws every thing loose; it draws no limiting lines; it fixes nothing; it leaves the amount of necessary obedience to be settled by every man for himself. Ah, my friends, there is enough of self-delusion without such a degree of it as this. Be not deceived. The perfect law of the infinitely Holy, of which not only the first requirement, but the fundamental and all-pervading principle, is supreme and ever-operative love to himself—is a law which brings us all in guilty, which cannot be rightly understood without forcing from the sinner's convicted conscience and humbled heart the exclamation, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who, O Lord, should stand?" It is the very perfection and unchangeableness of this law that renders the grace of the gospel necessary for us. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But God hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." "If righteousness (justification) come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—the entire scheme of redemption, with all its stupendous wonders, a useless

transaction! "He who thus reproveth God, let him answer it." I shall close with a single word or two to each of *three classes* of persons:

1. *Fellow believers in Christ.* Does the view which our text gives you of God's law make you sensible—more than ever sensible—of your need of gospel grace?—sensible that, but for that grace, every day would still bring you into condemnation?—every conscious "want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God," constituting you "guilty of all," and laying you anew under the curse, and exposed to the second death? Let this impress you the more deeply with two things: *first*, with the *value* of that grace in its freeness, its extent, and its perpetuity; it is untrammelled, unbounded, and "endureth for ever." Under a consciousness of daily short-comings and failures, when trying yourselves by God's spiritual and heart-searching law, look ever to the grace of God in Christ, and rejoice in his assurance that "if you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." And then, *secondly*, while you thus feel the value of the grace that pardons, seek to feel more and more, too, the value of the grace that *sanctifies*. Though the gospel has, by the faith of it, set you free from the bondage of all attempts at obtaining justification by the terms of law—attempts of which failure is the inevitable result—and every failure the means of augmenting the wretchedness of the bondage, adding to the weight and the galling tightness of the chain—yet you are never to forget that "you are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;" that your sanctification is just your restoration to conformity in heart and life to God's law—the bringing of your whole souls under the power of that holy love which is its great elementary principle—its spiritual fulfilment. Seek the growing prevalence in your hearts of the principles of the *new* nature; that so you may be able, more and more successfully and effectually, to resist and overcome the remaining power of the old, and thus to make increasingly apparent to all men the truth of the apostle's words, "Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law."

2. *Professors of the faith of Christ, whose lives are not in correspondence with your profession:* think what mischief you are doing. You yourselves stand condemned and disowned by *both law and gospel*. Your profession implies your relinquishment of hope from the former. But while in this relinquishment you are right; if you are professing to have hope from the latter, while you are not evincing the reality of your faith of it by practical obedience, the *gospel disowns your hope*. It acknowledges no unsanctified believers; it casts them off as maligners and slanderers of its holy character; who by their inconsistencies, their fruitless profession, their "form of godliness without its power," their "name to live while they are dead," bring it under reproach among men, as if it were an enemy to the law; whereas, conformity to the law is one of the great ends which it is designed by the faith of it to produce:—and as if it taught men to continue in sin in the hope of its grace abounding; whereas it is the very "grace which bringeth salvation," that "teacheth" all who receive it; "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Repent ye: away with your vain professions, your dead faith, your nominal Christianity, your heartless, lifeless, godless religion. Let the grace in which you profess to trust *so* teach you; else, I repeat, you stand disowned alike by the *LAW* and by the *GOSPEL*. You deceive yourselves; and you mislead, beguile, and ruin others. Your profession is but a mask. You may wear it while you live; but death will tear it off, and expose to view the unchanged features of the old man—all the more revolting for the contrast with the vizard that has concealed them. And when you shall stand for judgment before the Son of man, you will hear him say, with a look of blended judicial severity and pitying concern, in reply to every plea that you can present, "I know you not whence ye are."

3. *Fellow sinners*—(and in so addressing you I own myself, as every minister of Christ must, as naturally sustaining the same character and lying under

the same sentence with you)—fellow sinners :—let me put to you one question : Why is it—O why—that you prefer so many forms of self-delusion to the divine simplicity of the gospel ? I fain would “shut you up to Christ.” You cannot but be sensible, that by the terms of a law which you have broken, and by which, therefore, you are already condemned, you never can be justified. All attempts to obtain life by such a law must be hopeless. Were I, in urging the perfection of that law, and the universality of its curse, consigning you to despair, you might have some reason for being slow to admit so sad a conclusion, and for trying to make the best of your case, searching for the most specious plea you could devise. But it is not so ; we preach no despair ; no ; not to the “chief of sinners.” While the law stands firm to its sentence, pronouncing it irrepealable and unmitigatable, the GOSPEL stands by, with its offers of mercy—of free, full, and everlasting remission of all your guilt. It points to Calvary, and shows you there “sin atoned, the curse removed,” and God, in Christ, “waiting to be gracious.” Why, then, so many endeavours to find a way of *saving yourselves*, and set aside *God’s* way of saving you ? If the God with whom you have to do has, in his infinite love, devised, and executed, and revealed *his* plan of salvation, why so thankless as to try to get the credit and the glory to yourselves, and withhold them from him ? Can you possibly think that you will be safer in your own hands than in his ? safer in resting on a foundation laid by yourselves, than on resting on one laid by him ? safer on a human ground than on a divine ? He has, through the intervention of a Mediator—a divine Mediator—“magnified his law, and made it honourable,” for the very purpose that you, as transgressors of it, might obtain forgiveness and life, in harmony with its unmitigated claims, and with the uncompromised rights and untarnished glories of his throne. Can any plan of yours secure these ends better than his own ? And if these ends are not secured—secured thoroughly at every point—is salvation, think you, *possible* ? Possible, at the expense of the divine honour ! Think you, that as breakers of the law, you can be saved from the consequences otherwise than in a way glorifying to the Lawgiver ? You cannot, surely, in sober earnest, have the presumption to expect this. His law has condemned you ; it is his gospel alone that can save you. O refuse not the grace which it reveals. If you have refused it hitherto, refuse it no longer. You “know not what a day may bring forth.” You may, at this moment, for aught you can tell, be on the very verge of eternity. Will you, either now or at any future time, venture your plunge into that abyss—that shoreless and fathomless abyss,—even with the *risk*, and if this Book be the Word of God, (which I hold to be as sure as that God himself exists)—it is with *more* than the *risk*, with the *absolute certainty*—of perishing, when the means of safety are set before you, and are thus in your own power ? Will you go down with the foundering wreck, when the life-boat offers you a sure escape ? Will you brave the swelling floods of divine wrath, when the ark is open for you, and God himself invites you to enter ? O remember, that the penalty annexed to the divine law is as much a part of the law as any of its commandments are.—And to impress you with the fearfulness of that penalty, I will not attempt to harrow up your feelings, by giving loose to my imagination, and setting before you pictures of hell. I prefer another method. I would awaken you to a proper appreciation of the terrors of the law’s sentence of death—“the second death”—by pointing you to the very means which the infinitely just and holy—the infinitely wise and good God has deemed necessary to effect your deliverance from it. That can be no trifling evil in God’s eyes, that needed such an expiation ; that no light punishment, for which the only commutation was—the incarnation, and sufferings, and death of Immanuel. I point you to Gethsemane and to Calvary. I remind you who was the sufferer, as well as what were the sufferings endured. And with this sight before your eyes, I ask you, what that God must think of sin, to whom you have to render your account ?—what its punishment must be, when by such a Mediator, and such a Mediator

alone, it could be averted. Forget not, I beseech you, that it will not be according to *your* views of sin, and *your* estimate of its demerits, that the judgment of the great day will be conducted—but to God's. And here—in the garden and on the cross—you see what God's are. And the very fact that He who hung upon the cross is to occupy the judgment-seat, is enough to shew you on what principles the judgment is to be conducted and the sentences to be passed. How will you stand before him on the *throne*, ye who refuse him on the *cross*? If you will not have him for your *Saviour*, what will become of you, when you find him your *Judge*? If you condemn, or neglect the *grace* of his *gospel*, what can you look for but the *terrors* of his *law*? O be wise in time. You must appear at the divine tribunal. And when you appear there, it will not be that you may for the first time be pronounced guilty on the terms of law as if no such sentence had before been issued. *That* sentence has already gone forth. You lie under it. The question *then* will be, with regard to all gospel hearers, *whether it remains uncanceled*, and must be executed; whether the violated law must have its course. You may *now* have it canceled; but, *if not now, not then*. "Now is the accepted time." If you live and die without Christ, the time will be for ever gone—the opportunity irrecoverably lost. As death finds you, judgment will find you. Dying under the law's curse, under the law's curse you must rise, and "appear before the bar of Christ." It will be too late to put in a plea for mercy there. If mercy is to be found *then*, it must be found *now*. According as you lived and died here, with or without an interest in the merits of Christ's atonement, must you then have your place on the right or on the left hand of the Judge, as the subjects of the gospel's forgiving mercy, or of the broken law's unrepealed curse—to hear the sentence, "*Come ye blessed;*" or "*Depart ye cursed!*" For thus saith the Lord—and on both sides of the alternative his word will hold good—"He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him!"

JEPHTHAH'S VOW.

NOTES OF A SERMON,

BY THE REV. R. HAMILTON,

PREACHED AT BARBICAN CHAPEL, SUNDAY MORNING, JAN 4, 1852.

"I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."—JUDGES xi. 35.

SUCH was the declaration made by Jephthah, one of the judges of Israel, at a crisis in his history, which, according to the commonly received interpretation, must have been deeply afflicting. It remained for him to determine whether or not he would sacrifice his only child and beloved daughter. It is further imagined that he did actually, in accordance with his vow, sacrifice that child. The circumstances which led to his devotement of her—and it is manifest that there was some devotement of her—may be very briefly brought before your notice. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, fitting him singularly for the work given him to do. Under the guidance of that Spirit, he felt equally encouraged in the discharge of it; and that he might ensure, by every means in his power, success, he vowed a vow unto God, that if he returned victorious from the conflict, whosoever he found coming forth out of the door of his house, should be presented a sacrifice to God. The victory was as successful as his fondest expectations could wish; and on his return, to his great consternation and dismay, he met his only

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child and beloved daughter, with timbrels and with dance, rejoicing in the conquest he had achieved.

Such was his conviction of the sacredness of his vow, that he resolved, however painful to his own feelings, to fulfil it; and, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he "contended not with flesh and blood." Assuming, for a moment, that he did actually sacrifice his daughter—offer her up a burnt offering, we are certainly taught this lesson, that we ought to exercise the utmost caution as it respects our vows. Herod uttered a rash vow, and at the same time a most wicked vow, and he had subsequently most deeply to repent it. But whilst we believe in the sacredness of a vow, and think that a man is laid under solemn obligations to fulfil them, we would say that in any instance, without a single exception, that the vow which has been made improperly and irrationally, is sinful; that that vow is more honoured in the wish, than in the observance of it. The question arises, Was the vow of Jephthah of such a character? Did Jephthah sacrifice his daughter—offer her up as a burnt offering? Many of you are aware that ponderous volumes have been written with a view to decide this question; but it will not be expected that I shall give you the various opinions which have been entertained upon this passage; it may suffice to give you, as briefly as I can, my own, and then assign the reason for their adoption. The more deeply I ponder the matter, the more I am convinced that Jephthah *did not* sacrifice his daughter—did not offer her up as a burnt offering. I come to that conclusion, first, because had it actually been the case, it was an event so extraordinary that it seems highly improbable it should not have been recorded in this history. Secondly, because it is manifest that Jephthah was a good man; that it was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God; and that he could not but be aware that human sacrifice was not acceptable in the sight of God. Moreover, it is evident that Jephthah's daughter did survive many years, at least, and that the daughters of Israel were wont to go and converse with her, Judges xi. 39, 40. For this reason it seems to me evident that he did not present his daughter as a sacrifice. But the next question is, Did he act contrary to his vow? I am inclined to think he *did not*. The passage in which he makes the vow, is capable, upon the most Scriptural principles of interpretation, of a different rendering, (ver. 30.) Thus Jephthah's vow, you will perceive, consisted of two things; the one was, that the human being who came forth out of his house should be dedicated in a peculiar way to the Lord; and that, in addition to that, he would offer it a burnt offering to him; and it is manifest from the whole history, that he did in accordance with his vow. Whilst we have no statement to the fact that he offered her as a burnt offering, we cannot for a moment feel doubtful of his actually doing so: and then he dedicated her in a peculiar manner to the service of God. Her inheritance and her father were lost to her: and hence we see that in doing this, he made a great sacrifice. I do not say this interpretation is altogether free from difficulty, but it seems to me, upon a very careful examination of it, to be more free from difficulty than any other explanation with which I have met. Leaving you to your own conclusions, you will, I think, at once see its appropriateness for the present occasion—the first Sabbath of the new year.

In directing your thoughts to this subject with a view to our own practical improvement, we shall consider, first, *some of the vows which every christian makes*; second, *the fulfilment upon which he resolves*; and third, *the motives by which he is actuated*. Every christian has "opened his mouth unto the Lord." He has stated to him what he has resolved to do in the way of obedience to his requirements. In the general he has said as Israel said, "all that the Lord our God commandeth us that will we do;" and not only in the general, but he has surveyed God's special requirements, and said "that will I do in obedience to thy divine behests." It is well for us frequently to review the subject matter of the vows which we hear distinctly and personally made to God. Every christian has made a vow of his cordial acceptance of Christ as revealed in the gospel. He is the one appointed and only Saviour; and every christian vows he will receive him, and does receive him, in that capacity, and like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he says, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." You have vowed to receive him as your Prophet, to whose instructions you will constantly listen; as your Priest, who has actually atoned for your sins, and who is now interceding within the veil, your Advocate and Intercessor; as your King, to whose laws you would pay the greatest respect and yield implicit obedience. You vowed you would have him as your companion when, like the three Hebrew youths, you are called to enter the scorching fire of trial and affliction. You vowed you would receive him as your ark of safety, and as your Rock upon which you could build safely and securely. You vowed you would receive him as your heavenly Manna, as the Fountain of your supplies,

which will prove, not like the vessel of Hagar, but will continually supply your necessities. You vowed you would receive him as the Alpha, the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last; and it is important that, as you have vowed to receive him, and as christians have actually received him, that so you will walk in him, being rooted and grounded in love. Never let us forget the vows which we have uttered in relation to Jesus Christ; and whatever temptation may assail, let each one courageously say, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Again. You have vowed decided preference for the people whom he has redeemed. This is given in various parts of the inspired volume as the test of godliness. Our Lord said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one towards another." The apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren;" and the Psalmist speaks of the choice he had made, and could tell of the saints, the excellent of the earth, in whom was his delight. The people of God are oftentimes a poor and afflicted people, but they are the best of people and "the habitation of the just is blessed," however humble it may be. Let it be seen that there is in reality a preference for the saints—the excellent of the earth.

Every christian has also vowed a settled purpose to seek the holiness which God requires. We are told that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We have the command of God himself bearing upon this point, "Be ye holy," and he urges as a motive, "for I am holy saith the Lord your God;" and we are urged not to be "conformed to this world," but to be "transformed and renewed in our minds." Then it is enjoined upon us as adopted children into God's family, that we "come out from the world, and be separated from it, and touch not the unclean things," and then he has promised to "receive us, and to be a Father to us." And you have vowed that, however others may conform to the maxims and the customs of this world, you would stand out firm and bold as a holy people, a peculiar nation, zealous of every good work. You resolved that "holiness to the Lord" should be inscribed upon every habit, and that if men should think it strange you did not run with them to the same excesses of riot, you resolved to vow that you would heed the apostolic injunction, "I beseech you, strangers and pilgrims, that you would abstain from fleshly lusts," and to say, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Then there was the vow of entire consecration to the word and the service of Jehovah. Like David, when first you set out in your christian course you said, "Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant," if you could not add, "and the son of thy hand-maid." You vowed you would make it your constant aim to recognise the great christian fact that you are not your own, that you are bought with a price; and that you are bound to glorify God with your bodies and your spirits which are his. We have lost all right, or proprietorship, and claim to ourselves; and just as amongst the Romans, after a soldier was enlisted into their armies, he took the military oath of fidelity to the captain which was placed over him; so has every Christian in effect taken the sacramental oath of allegiance to Christ, the great Captain of his salvation; and he has said, "Send me to the thickest place of battle: if the Lord of heaven be with me, and the God of Jacob be my Refuge, I am prepared to go thither."

Nor can you fail to remember some of the solemn scenes and circumstances connected with your vows unto the Lord. You can look back to the retirement of the closet, when there was no eye upon you but the eye which seeth in secret; no ear open to the declaration, but the ear of Him who heareth the softest whispers. Many of you opened seasons your mouths unto the Lord in of affliction and trial, and you said if God would recover you from that affliction which threatened death, you would devote yourself with more earnestness than you had ever done, to his service and glory. Have you paid your vows which your lips uttered in secret? You uttered your vows at the sacramental table—so it was interpreted by all who stand connected with you in Christian fellowship; and you said,—

"Witness ye men and angels now,
Before the Lord we speak,
To him we make our solemn vow,
A vow we dare not break.

"As long as life itself shall last,
Ourselves to Christ we yield,
Nor from his cause will we depart,
Or ever quit the field."

Now let us look at "the fulfilment upon which our Christian character resolved." There are temptations arising in every Christian's history, to violate

the vows which his lips have uttered. You have resolved that you cannot go back when duties are arduous. A course of high-toned integrity will always be connected with difficulty and trial. If the Christian has resolved not to compromise the principles of his holy profession, he will lay to his account, experience in trial and difficulty, and often be constrained to say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Let us say, "we have vowed unto the Lord, and we cannot go back," when temptations are various. There are temptations arising from the world, the flesh, and the devil. When the world is tempting you to go back by its blandishments and allurments, let the sentiment still be, "I have vowed," &c. When afflictions are protracted and severe. When Job was visited with calamity after calamity; when by one fell stroke he was bereft of his family, and all that he held dear to him, his wife said unto him, "Curse God and die." You find the sweet singer of Israel at one period of his history, when the providences of God were dark and mysterious respecting him, declared that he had arrived almost at the very verge of Atheism; that he "was envious at the prosperity of the wicked," and of their freedom from the trials to which the people of God were exposed.

When you have quitted the society of those with whom you formerly associated, and have joined yourself to the Lord's people, there will be a probable taunt that you have become "righteous over much," and are denying yourself what you might very lawfully enjoy. But whatever might be the plausibility of the statement inducing you to go back, let your answer be.—

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed, shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hours I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

Now let us look at the "motives by which every Christian is urged." And certainly, it is a motive to look at the being to whom we have made the vow. To make a vow to a fellow-man involves obligation, unless as we have seen, it be sinful to fulfil it; but it is not a vow made to a fellow-creature, it is a vow made to God. The Psalmist appears to have realized this, when he says, "*Thy* vows, oh God, are upon me." And every Christian should say, "I cannot go back, because many eyes are upon me, much expectation is cherished, many prophecies have gone before respecting me. The eyes of the church, the eyes of bad men, of holy angels, and especially of the great searcher of hearts are upon me, I cannot go back."

Moreover, you cannot go back without blame; "When Israel turneth back in the day of battle, what shall we say?" Say? Why say it is most disgraceful! Say? Why say it is most dishonourable! Say? Why say they had better not have known the way of life, than to have known it and turned again to the beggarly elements of this polluted world. What shall we say? Why say it is exceedingly ungrateful! Say? there is no recognition of the claims of God.

You cannot go back with safety to yourselves. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." It will also prove prejudicial to the interests of others; it causes the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Instead of going back, let your motto and mine be,—onward! onward! What we want is, that each one of us should say at the commencement of this year, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, we pressing forward to the things that are before."

Remember, that all declension begins in the closet. If there is remissness in its duties, if you are cold and heartless in its engagements, there is the evil to be indulged that you will go back. If we would avoid going back, let us look up for divine assistance. "Fear not," says the gracious Saviour, "I will hold thee by the right hand: when thou walkest through the waters I will be with thee." But what is the condition of those who have not paid their vows unto the Lord? Some of you may be looking upon yourselves with great complacency; you may think that because you have not opened your mouth unto the Lord, that therefore you are exonerated from the discharge of all duty. You speak of yourselves as "no hypocrites; there is no inconsistency in you; you do not profess one thing and act another. But oh! it is a fearful consistency." I urge you then, beloved, to consecrate yourselves a living sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable service.

It is supposed that the word *oath*, comes from a root which signifies a *hedge*; and I want you to have this hedge about you; I want you to have the hedge of the solemn oath to God, that whatever others do, you will serve him. Let me tell you that his service is no drudgery, that it is perfect freedom; that you will have ample rewards in his service in this world, and in the world to come unbounded everlasting happiness. Oh, let there be the solemn declaration made by each and all. "I have vowed unto the Lord and I cannot go back."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

Four Lectures on the Mission of Jonah to Nineveh.

SUBJECTS OF THE FOUR LECTURES:

- I.—JONAH'S MISSION AND FLIGHT.
- II.—THE PUNISHMENT AND RESCUE OF JONAH.
- III.—JONAH'S PREACHING AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE PEOPLE.
- IV.—JONAH'S PETULENCE AND GOD'S MERCY.

JONAH'S MISSION AND FLIGHT.

First Lecture.

BY THE REV. CLEMENT DUKES, M.A.,

DELIVERED

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 4, 1852.

"Now the word Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."—JONAH L 1, 2, 3.

OUR knowledge of the private history of Jonah is very scanty. He was the son of Amittai, and a native of Gath-hepher, in the tribe of Zebulun, and consequently situated in Galilee, out of which it was said no prophet ever came. One thing is definitely known, that certain events happened in the reign of Jeroboam II., "according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah." This does not fix Jonah to that reign, but merely proves that his era was not later than the events announced. The opinion of competent scholars is, that he was contemporary with Jehu, about 862 B.C. If this opinion can be relied on, he was the contemporary, if not the predecessor of Amos and Hosea, the earliest of the prophets whose writings are exhibited in a collected form.

And the history of Nineveh is not less obscure than the private life of Jonah. But let it be remembered this is no reflection upon Scripture, inasmuch as it is not an history of all the cities of the earth, or of all the tribes of earth's population, but only of one family. And as no one expects to find in the history of England, an account of Tamerlane, or Timour the Tartar, or the grand Lama of Thibes; so no one should complain that the Bible, the history of the church, should do no more than accidentally refer to other people as they happen to affect his favoured family.

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was situated on the Tigris, as Babylon was

on the Euphrates. Nineveh was about 280 miles north of Babylon. These two rivers took their rise in the mountain of Ararat. They flowed wide of each other for several hundred miles, until they gradually drew nearer to each other, and at length ran into one channel, and soon fell into the Persian Gulf.

The space enclosed within the borders of these two rivers is among the most remarkable of any upon the face of the earth. It was variously called Meso-potamia, from its position between these rivers, and Ur of the Chaldees, the native country of Abraham, and the land of Shinar. And, in all probability, the garden of Eden was planted somewhere within its borders; and, without doubt, it has been the stage on which some of the mightiest scenes in the world's drama have been performed. Babylon was separated from the Holy Land, whereas Nineveh was so far to the north, that the great desert was left far way to the south.

That Babylon was founded by Nimrod is plainly stated in Genesis x. 8—12. And in this passage it is written that "Ashur builded Nineveh." Some contend for a different rendering. Scholars are pretty equally divided as to whether the meaning is that he (Nimrod) went out of Assyria and builded Nineveh after he had built Babylon—or that a man, named Asshur, went out of Babylon and founded this city, which became of such note in the earth. But it must not be supposed that the city reached the height of its glory in one generation. "Rome was not built in a day." In its ripest period it was a city of vast extent. Babylon was built in an exact square, measuring fifteen miles on each side—but Nineveh was of an oblong form, about twenty miles long, and twelve broad, making sixty in compass. It was surrounded by a wall 100 feet high, and was broad enough for three chariots to be driven abreast, and was defended by 1500 towers, at equal distances, and 200 feet high.

The population at the time of Jonah's visit may be very fairly estimated at little short of a million, in round numbers. The infants amounted to more than six score thousand persons; and these, at the usual computation of multiplying the infants by five, would give 600,000. Such a population invests the mission of Jonah with thrilling interest. Who can contemplate the doom of such a mass, so long as it was in suspense, without emotion?

The historian supplies no definite account of the morality of this city. Nothing is specified beyond this—"Their wickedness is come up before me." Yet we may conjecture that one of its chief offences was gross impurity, because one of its Deities was Venus under another name. And as Bacchus was the type of intemperance, and Mars of cruelty and bloodshed, so Venus was of sensuality and lust. And this conjecture is strongly favoured by various devices that are found upon the "Nineveh marbles," now deposited in the British Museum.

The fortunes of this famous city, like all other cities that have relied for its security and its territory upon the sword, were very various. Sometimes in the ascendant, and sometimes in depression—now a conqueror, and now a vassal. Many of its princes were men of note, but none attracted more attention than the effeminate but splendid Sardanapalus. The story of this man is, that he gave himself up to every luxury and indulgence; that his resources were boundless; that he sustained a siege of three years; that an unexampled rise of the Tigris, undermined and threw down a considerable portion of the city wall; that this fell upon the king, as an evil omen, because the oracle had declared that the city was safe so long as the river should make no breach upon the wall. He now lost heart; and gathering a vast pile of wood in one of the courts of the palace, he brought all his precious vessels of gold and silver, together with all his jewels and other things of great value, and finally his wives and all the ladies of his Harem, and kindling the pile, all perished together in one common destruction, preferring the short pain of self-immolation, to the disgrace and drudgery of subjection and bondage. The only maxim of this

prince was, "Eat, and drink, and be merry;" and life was valued only as long as this maxim could be indulged. But all other facts in the history of Nineveh are outdone, by the destruction of the Assyrian host, under the command of Sennacherib, before the walls of Jerusalem. It is mentioned in 2 Kings xix. 32—37; and in Isaiah xxxvii. 33—38. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord, concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred four-score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning they were all dead corpses." The event, here so briefly and simply narrated, has not escaped the eye of the poet, nor has it been unappreciated by him. Hear his pathetic and exquisite rendering of the incident!

- " The Assyrian came down, like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars of the sea
When the blue wave rolls mightily in deep Galilee.
- " Like the leaves of the forest, when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest, when autumn hath blown,
That host, on the morrow, lay withered and strewn.
- " For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breath'd in the face of the foe as he past!
And the eyes of the sleeper wax'd deadly and chill,
And mens' hearts but once heav'd, and for ever grew still!
- " And there lay the steed, with his nostril all wide,
And thro' it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray on the rock-beating surf.
- " And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent—the banners alone,
The lances unlifted—the trumpets unblown.
- " And the widows of Ashur were loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

This invasion of Jerusalem by the Assyrians was but one of a series; for it was the calamity of the Holy Land to be an object of envy, equally to Assyria and Egypt; being regarded by each, very much in the form of the key to the other; and hence it happened that Judea was frequently assailed by one or the other of these gigantic rivals. No doubt this circumstance—namely, the violent intrusion of these heathen nations upon the Jews, will account for their being mentioned at all in the pages of Sacred Scripture.

The latest allusion to Nineveh, occurs in the book of the prophet Nahum, who wrote several years subsequent to the time of Jonah, but many years before the final destruction of Nineveh, which he predicts in such sublime language. The same subject is mentioned in Zeph. ii. 13, "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and will destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry, like a wilderness." And it was all absolutely accomplished at the time appointed, more than 600 B.C., and continues in that state until this day.

All these circumstances surround the labours and successes of Layard, in England, and Batta, in France, with immense interest. It will not be thought

to be out of place here, to give some account of the present aspect of this ancient ruin. Until very recently it was much disputed which really was the mound that entombed the city. Nineveh was so utterly buried by accumulated *debris* of more than 2000 years, that there was nothing whereby to discriminate it from other mounds that were the work of nature; and nothing could decide the question but absolute and laborious excavation.

The traveller who is now favoured to visit this ancient ruin, can stand upon the mound, designated the Palace of Nimrod, and can survey the mighty plain as far as the eye can reach. The only objects that give variety to this arid plain, are the Tigris winding its course at a considerable distance; the volumes of smoke for ever rising from the pits of bitumen, and here and there in the extreme distance, the misty outline of some mighty mountains. Our indefatigable and enterprising countryman has penetrated the mound, discovered chamber after chamber of princely character, and has exhumed mighty masses of masonry curiously wrought into fantastic figures of winged lions and winged bulls, and other grotesque forms. Several of these have been forwarded to our own museum, and deserve universal and profound attention. But beside these gigantic monsters, he has discovered the interior of the chambers are faced with stone, carved with figures which represent in detail, many of the habits, together with much of the history and religion of that ancient people. But the most precious discoveries have been certain tablets bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions; and these, so far as decyphered, confirm the statements in sacred Scripture. So that it is no freak of fancy to say that as the discoveries of Geology have laid open the remotest history of our globe written with the finger of God, and buried in the catacombs of nature until this day, so the ruins of the most ancients are unfolding a volume that shall furnish independent and unquestionable testimony to the truth of God's Word. Nothing hitherto has invalidated in any point the testimony of Moses and the Prophets; and it is no violation of modesty to say nothing ever will.

It has been found that the plan pursued in these mighty structures, was to raise a huge platform of solid brickwork, so as to give a suitable elevation above the lowly surface of the plain to this platform, to rear the huge fabric for the king's palace. This preliminary building was the more necessary, inasmuch as the palace was comprised of one floor; but by opening the floor of some of the apartments, there have been disclosures that indicate that the present ruin covers a still more ancient ruin.

It was against this wonderful city, so fraught with interest, that the Prophet Jonah was commissioned to go, and utter his denunciations of God's anger. The *occasion* of his visit is probably referred to in 2 Kings xiv. 23—27, "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebal, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher."

The Jews say Jonah was the son of the woman of Shunem, who befriended Elisha. In requital of her kindness the prophet assured her she should have a son. The son was born in due time, and when he was grown he went into the field to his father, and was smitten by the sun, and died. The mother then fetched Elisha to see him, and he was raised to life. And the Jews say this son was no other than Jonah. In all probability this is as untrue as most of the other inventions of tradition.

The reason why Jonah was sent on such a mission is not stated. All our conclusions upon this matter must be mere conjecture. Whether Nineveh was contemplating an assault upon Judæ, we cannot tell, or whether it was an act

of God's sovereignty—a kind of “calling the Gentiles,” we cannot tell. The mission is abundantly opened by the words, “Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying, Arise, and go unto Nineveh, that great city.” But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish: his first point was Joppa, the nearest sea-port to Jerusalem, and a place of great traffic and resort; but what place is meant by Tarshish is not known, as there were several so called. One of these was a gold country, a kind of ancient California. This place is thus spoken of in 2 Chron. ix. 21, “For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks.” Where this place was is impossible to tell; many judge of its locality by its produce, but nothing more. There was Tarsus, in Cilicia, the birth-place of the Apostle Paul, close against Joppa; and there was Tartessus, in Spain. But the most probable opinion is, that Tarshish was a generic term that was applied to all places of maritime importance. It must suffice us to know that Jonah contemplated the desertion of his appointed place, and thought to retire to some foreign port. Probably he held the popular error that “the Spirit of the Lord” was restricted to the land of Israel; and that if he could escape unto foreign ports he should be relieved of his hated mission.

Such is the best account I am able to furnish of ancient Nineveh, and the mission and flight of Jonah, who was commanded to rise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and to cry against it, for their wickedness had come up before the Lord.

We shall now endeavour, in a series of distinct consideration, to give a practical bearing to the thoughts suggested by the prophet's appointment to Nineveh.

I. The first remark will apply to the *state* of the city. As already observed, we are left very much to conjecture what were the kind and extent of wickedness that prevailed in Nineveh. But, on the admitted principle, if you know a peoples' gods, you can determine the peoples' character, we need be at no loss about Nineveh, and under no fear of exaggeration. All history has testified that idolatry is never to be viewed as simply absurd, it is always polluting and degrading, and mostly cruel; and the most ancient systems are no exception to this rule; “they that make them are LIKE unto them; and so is every one that trusteth in them.” “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God: their drink offerings of *blood* will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.” And the picture of idolatry drawn by the apostle in Rom. i. 20—32, black and loathsome as are its details, has never been impugned. He copied from nature in his day; and he saw idolatry in its palmy days—in the golden age—when the popular superstitions were adorned with all that classic learning and lofty genius could supply. And all who have compared modern idolatry with this original have pronounced it to be a faithful portrait. Just take a fragment from Rom. iii. 12 as a specimen of the whole —“They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes.” Such systems, left to themselves, would provoke another desolation. It is known that great cities are prone to great vices. As they become rich by the accumulation of individual talent, and by stimulating to the utmost every latent power that can be made available to the common good: so they become vile by the accumulation of individual vices. If it be true that “evil communications corrupt good manners,” and that “one sinner destroyeth much good,” then must it be still more true that the aggregation of such elements in the midst of large communities must leaven the whole mass with corruption.

Many great cities have been destroyed by their own greatness; they became unwieldy, and their growth was but the developement of evil. There was no compensatory power to balance the evil; they were not good as well as great, and this is our consolation in the contemplation of the vast outgrowth of the city in which we live. We have nothing to fear for our own city from its greatness if we can but saturate it with Bible truth. In such a consummation its greatness will be but the measure and the means of its usefulness. The channel cannot be too full if the stream that rolls there is the water of life. Greatness, in itself, is not an evil; else the greatness of God would be a source of unmingled terror. But as God is the greatest, so he is the best of beings. "His greatness is unsearchable;" but then "his goodness reacheth unto the heavens." For the same reason true greatness of every kind is an instrument of good; the greater the better, if it be but under the control of goodness. Were we to allow the place of the Bible to be usurped by the flaunting finery of a baptised idolatry; were we to set up images, and say, "these are thy gods, O Israel," or were to rely for our stability upon Priests or Princes, we might tremble. But our trust is in Bible truth. A city pervaded by the gospel of Christ can never be too great. Nineveh perished, and Rome, and Corinth, and Athens perished, not because they were great, but because "they knew not God."

II. The state of the city aroused the anger of God. God cannot be an unmoved spectator of human affairs. He is susceptible of evil and of good; he is as sensitive as none but God can be. The greater that refinement is, the greater must that susceptibility be. Of the truth of this we can adduce the plainest evidence. It will be admitted as a fact that the genuine artist, or poet, for instance, are exquisitely affected by the tender, the beautiful, and the sublime, and are no less painfully affected by the opposite of these. Their enjoyments of nature are as superior to those of the rude kind as heaven is superior to earth. Every pore of their souls is open, and drinks in enjoyment from every object. And what is the reason of this? It is not an acquired or an optional habit; is it not a part of their original mental structure? The chords of their souls are of the exquisite order of the *Æolian* harp. The slightest breath of morn or eve will move them to a soothing murmur. Such powers may be cultivated, but they cannot be acquired. It is vain to expose an artificial rosebud to the summer sun, it will never expand—the vital principle is wanting.

This tender and exalted susceptibility constitutes the highest form of genius. Where there is genius there must be susceptibility. And let this be expanded still further. The benevolent heart is always affected by the misery of any object; and the patriot by everything that affects the true prosperity of his country; and the scholar by whatever violates or promotes learning. And reasoning from the less to the greater, as God is the Perfection, and indeed, the Source of all these, he cannot fail to be moved by the abominations of the wicked, as well as by the purity of the good. Accordingly we find it written, "God is angry with the wicked every day;" "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God;" "shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord;" "is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Are we not warranted from these things to conclude that God is a close and an interested observer of men? His notice was not confined to wicked Nineveh. Every wicked city will be visited for its wickedness.

III. God threatened Nineveh in order to save it, and not in order to destroy it: nor is this procedure open to censure. It is not desirable that the wicked should be suffered to be at ease. Such a permission would be a reflection alike upon the mercy and the wisdom of the Governor. Impunity is neither to be expected nor desired. God sends forth messengers to alarm and to warn the wicked. True it is their testimony is disregarded and sometimes derided,

but this does not alter the intention of God, nor affect the benevolence of his government. It cannot be denied that our Lord "came to his own, and his own received him not." "He was despised and rejected of men;" but this proves nothing against the truth or the wisdom of his mission. So God may be slighted and insulted by the wicked, and his witnesses and warnings set at nought. He has a vast and awful array of these to do his bidding; he is not dependant upon a wayward Jonah; he chooses to employ pestilence or famine, or to permit foreign war or civil strife. All these in turn have gone forth as the voice of God, warning the refractory and recalling the wandering. There are always some kind of appeals addressed to men, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." God does not suffer man to perish unwarned or unrebuked.

How unlike to this is the policy of earthly princes. If they have but power to punish, they will not warn them till the plot is ripe, but rather wait like the tiger for the prey; and as soon as all is ready for execution, he springs upon his guilty subjects, and destroys them exultingly. But God aims to prevent rather than to punish. "He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live."

IV. The instrument employed in this case was remarkable. God's estimate of the suitability of an instrument is not always according to human judgment. Appearances are not always an infallible criterion of adaptation; the senses often deceive and there are undeveloped resources far beyond the ken of an unskilful eye. Many a work of art has been produced by a most unlikely person, and with a rough tool. Genius, or even stern necessity, can infuse into the rudest implement a perfectly magical power. And looking at Jonah, the wisdom of the Lord seems compromised in the choice. He was called to an office, but refused the appointment, and fled. But this is no proof he was not competent, but simply that he was not willing. His reasons for evading the duty were complicated—*fear, indolence, national prejudice, and personal vanity*, all concurred to make him reluctant. But none of these amounted to anything but a *moral* incompetence. He only wanted the *heart*, he had every other necessary talent, and this could be secured by remonstrance or by chastisement. God might have found some agent more willing than Jonah, but none more able; and he had some adequate though unexplained reason for his preference. "I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." He is never at a loss for suitable agents, though he sometimes selects those that appear to us the least suitable. He does not always explain the reason of his choice, though he always has a reason. He often chooses the humblest instruments, in order — that the honour due to himself may not be unrighteously and injuriously given to the agent. "He hath put this treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man." "It hath pleased him by the *foolishness* of preaching to save them that believe;" "that no flesh should glory in his presence."

V. The flight of the prophet is the last fact to engage our attention this evening. I shall not so much consider it in detail, as in the abstract; although we might fairly characterize it as unmanly and cruel, as well as absurd and sinful. His duty did not involve the pains of martyrdom, but merely an act of intervention to turn away the wrath of God from a guilty people. And beside being an affront to the goodness and the authority of God, it involved such gross and palpable ridiculous forgetfulness of the omniscience of the Most High. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth

not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." The attempt of Jonah therefore to withdraw from God was simply absurd.

But we need not detain our minds upon these details, let us rather consider the flight of God's servants in general. The withdrawal of some men from great cities is not an evil, but a good. Many have been richly endowed by Providence, whose influence notwithstanding has been evil, only evil, and that continually. The absence of such, is to be desired, as the departure of the plague or any other pestilence. But alas! cities and princes do not wisely discriminate between the good and the bad, the useful and the pernicious. Most cities, perhaps all, have, at one time or other, cherished the baneful and the pure. The State has too often denounced the true patriot as a traitor; and the church has too often branded the true Christians as heretics; and both have threatened to hurry out of the land, else worse, some of the most holy and best disposed of the people. Many a city has ejected their best citizens, the only men of their day, who could serve them well. Some were banished by a judicial act, and others were so evil-entreated, that they were driven into a self-exile. The history of the Covenanters and Puritans, and Nonconformists, and Pilgrim Fathers, were, as a body, men of whom the world was not worthy. They had it in their hearts, and they had it in their power to serve their generation by the will of God, but the powers that then were, cast them out, and treated them as worse than felons. This is a folly of which every civilized nation has been often guilty; only think of such men as John Robinson, pastor of the Pilgrim church, in Leyden, being denounced by the Government, and driven out of his native land. Time would fail, to speak of the noble army of men who were thus treated. Let it suffice, that we assert, that it has happened ten thousand times, that the exile has been the profoundest statesman, the purest patriot, and the most consistent Christian.

But the history of Jonah denounces another class of men, the opposite of those now mentioned; men who withdraw, or shrink from duty, because it is painful or costly, or ill-requested. Whereas, it is written, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." And let me ask, what good thing in our world can be accomplished without toil, and effort, and sacrifice? And shall any man having a mission to a great city, shrink from it, through counting the cost? No man must expect to do good in this world without being requited with evil for his pains. But "if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are you."

The best of men may fail in their best efforts to serve their race; but this neither excuses them from duty, nor ignores their mission. Duty is not measured by failure or by success. Villains often succeed, where the upright fail; but this in no way proves that the wicked is approved, and the righteous rejected. Each must do his duty and leave the issue to God.

In conclusion, let me ask, Have we any Jonahs here? Any who might serve their generation, but neglect their duty? If there be, let them gaze on Jonah and blush.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE PUNISHMENT AND RESCUE OF JONAH.

Second Lecture.

BY THE REV. CLEMENT DUKES, M.A.,

DELIVERED

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,
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"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."—JONAH i. 17; ii. 10.

You must carefully observe the titles of the lectures, and that I am not lecturing upon the Book of Jonah so much as upon certain great facts in the history of Jonah. We shall have cursorily to refer to the various incidents connected with these facts—and we can only glance at them—in order that we may have larger opportunity of fixing your attention upon the precise topics that are indicated for this evening's discussion.

"The punishment and rescue of Jonah," are the principle topics that are to engage our minds. A series of wonders without parallel is presented to our minds in the chapter which we have read in your hearing to-night. There is not merely an air of the supernatural about them, they are literally and absolutely supernatural events—events that indicate the direct, positive and literal interference of the Divine hand.

The greatest and most striking circumstance is the storm at sea; and we have no such description of a storm anywhere, as we have in the Bible. Take Psalm cvii. 23rd to the 30th verses, for instance—"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep; for he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof; they mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble; they reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." And in order to enter into the topic now to engage our minds, you must conceive the sea which is depicted by the inspired writer. There is the vessel

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driven by a mighty wind upon a raging ocean. We have the picture of this vessel presented before us, where are gathered together all the mariners, with the shipmaster; all are in the most utter consternation and alarm. There seems to be, between them and death, but one little step; and at every passing moment they are expecting to make that plunge that would precipitate them into a dark and dreary eternity. In the midst of all this consternation, having failed in all their skilful attempts to protect the vessel from the fury of the storm, they gave themselves to prayer. Every man had a god, and every man called upon his own god.

If you can allow your imagination to dwell upon this scene, it must present to you a most dramatic aspect. These mariners are on every account a most interesting study to every thoughtful mind. They evidently indicate that they had a deep sense of the Divine resting upon their minds; and whatever men may say about being Atheists, it is all a pretence! They may declare that they believe there is no God; but yet there are frequent indications, in their mental and moral history, when they shew that, with all their boasting, they notwithstanding have an awful impression resting upon them, that there is one great Being, on whom all things depend, and to whom all creatures must bow. That these men had an impression of the Divine resting upon them is clear, from this circumstance—they attributed the tempest that now threatened to engulf them, to the power of heaven; and they sought deliverance also from the hand of the God they worshipped. It was evidently their opinion that the storm was an expression of God's anger—a very popular opinion! and it often happens that persons are very ready to ascribe their *troubles* to God, but we have no recognition of the Divine hand, when their *cup of mercy* is full to overflowing; we have the same thought pervading the entire book of Job. The three friends assailed Job with the same idea, "Your sorrows are without parallel, therefore your sins must be greater than the sins of any other man." If this were true, where would be the barometer by which we could easily determine the state and character of any individual, and of any family? We should come at once to the conclusion, "the man that has the greatest sorrows is the greatest sinner." But Christianity forbids so absurd a conclusion.

We have also an indication of the character of their religion in this circumstance—"they betook themselves to *prayer*." They had faith in the power of prayer; they thought that their gods were attentive to the cry of their worshippers, and if they could but secure the favour of their Deities, they should be rescued from their troubles. This also failed, and there was but one resource left; that was—they determined to "*cast lots*," in order to ascertain who was the sinner. They were persuaded there must be one amongst them who had offended the Deity, and that the affront was being resented; and unless they should immediately offer an atonement, ruin would be the consequence to all. There is too much of this absurdity amongst men of the present day. Many, in the time of trouble, will open the Bible for instance, or will lift up the Bible and let it open itself, and then suddenly turn the eye to a passage and expect that God will so order events that their eyes shall fall upon the passage that is to meet their case. The will of the Deity extorted by a glance

of the eye!! The absurdity! How many of us are superstitious enough to addict ourselves to such practices as these. You laugh to scorn the poor mariners who, in their ignorance, gathered together the brethren, and now say, "Upon the casting of this die is to depend our fate!" But O! how infinitely more ridiculous—were it not that in the very scorn we feel, there is an element of intense disgust at the wickedness involved—I say, how infinitely more absurd and ridiculous is that man, who is not merely the *slave*, but the willing slave of that little dice! The rattle of the box has a charm for him he cannot resist; and he will stake all he has—not his money, that were a trifle; a man may lose all the wealth of this world, and lose nothing after all—but he loses his character, his peace, his self-respect; he will sacrifice his wife, his children, his home—everything, to the casting of the dice! And this is a man!—a thing!—created in the image of God, capable of worshipping God—that man tosses up his head and says, "I am a man after all!" Let us take heed, then, whilst we form our opinion of such a transaction as that recorded in this chapter, we are not convicted ourselves of the very absurdities we have hurled at the conduct of these poor men.

In their extremity they suddenly thought of Jonah. There is a stranger below, a passenger, says the shipmaster, who instantly rushed below, and looked for him. And what does he find? The man was absolutely fast asleep!—just like the virgins on the night of the wedding, when the cry was heard, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;"—"they all slumbered and slept." And when our Lord was praying in the garden, as well as in the act of transfiguration, his favourite disciples were fast asleep. Men sleep in the midst of danger! We are often told that the determined sinner "dies like a lamb;" his conscience is asleep; his heart is asleep; and his surrounding and sorrowing relatives say, "Oh! he has gone to heaven!" Why? Because he died in a sleep! Oh! what a foolish and unreasonable conclusion! Jonah was a *criminal*, but Jonah was *asleep*. They brought him up and confronted him at once; and an awful scene it was; and they said unto him, "Tell us, we pray thee, for what cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? Whence comest thou? What is thy country—and of what people art thou?" And here is a beautiful feature in the history of Jonah. He seems to have recovered himself—to have realised the absolute position of his relation to God. Mark the truthfulness; mark the dignity—the beauty of his reply—"And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew, and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid; and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For they knew that he had fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them."

Immediately connected with this paragraph, we have his confession, his conviction, and his sentence. He had to pronounce his own sentence. Just as it will be at that great day when God shall separate the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the wicked. Every man will be his own accuser, his chief judge, and will pass his own sentence. And he told them what they were to do with him; he pronounced the will of God in reference to himself. Whether

this was done in despair, being tired of his life—though nothing in the context would indicate this—or whether he was prompted, in his answer to the ship-master, by the inspiration of the Most High, we cannot tell. Dwell for a moment on the contrast of this scene with another. On the sea of Galilee was a little vessel; on board of which were a few fishermen; the sea rolled and was very tempestuous, and they were all afraid. But they remembered there was one on board, who was not then amongst them; and they went down and said unto him, “Master!” And they awoke him; and they said, “Carest thou not that we perish?” And he came forth—not like Jonah, to condemnation—but, standing on the brow of the vessel, he looked upon the foaming billows, and lifted up his hand, and with the dignity of God he said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” “There was a great calm.” *He* came forth to triumph—*Jonah* to despair.

We might then direct our minds most pleasantly to the hesitation manifested by the mariners in consigning Jonah to the deep. Mark, also, the great reluctance they displayed. They used all means in their power before they came to this terrible issue—“They rowed hard,” for it was a sailing vessel; and like all vessels of that time, it was rowed as well as helped forward by the wind. Some of the vessels had one bank, some two, and some three banks; and they received their names accordingly. They could accommodate many rowers at once, and they did their best, and manifested the tenderness of their hearts and the reluctance of their spirits, and the remorse they felt in contemplating the destruction of Jonah. But there was no escaping—it was the will of God, and the will of God must be executed. And, brethren, an execution *anywhere* is an awful thing. Oh! to be doomed to witness one—to see a poor creature hurried in the midst of life and health, in very early youth, perhaps, into an awful eternity—what a spectacle! But to see an execution at sea, to stand upon the deck and see a man deliberately walk upon a plank until he reaches the end, and overbalance himself, and make that plunge from which he shall never be extricated until the day when the sea shall give up its dead! We say, the *burial* of the dead at sea must be an awful event, but oh! the *execution* of a living man under such circumstances must be most terrible! And it was so. It issued manifestly not only in the consternation, but evidently in the conversion of these sailors.

This brings us—for we must not pause here, we must not loiter by the way, though at every step there is something fascinating to attract attention. No sooner had he made this fatal plunge, than there was one appointed of heaven to meet him. A great monster was there; Jonah plunged into the depths of darkness, and into the jaws of a monster which God had provided for that purpose. We generally have the word *whale* connected with the deliverance of Jonah; but you must all remember that the word *whale* is not in the original; it is rightly rendered in this chapter, a “*great fish*,” and therefore all difficulty about the throat of the whale, and all the cavilling and quibbling upon that score is done away. It is not of necessity a great whale; the original does not indicate that, but simply that it was a great fish of any kind whatsoever. Some attempts have been made to get rid of the difficulty in various

ways. One of them is this. They say the original word, which literally means "a great fish," was in all probability the name of the cove of the sea, like the Cove of Cork; and that he was cast into this inlet which had that name. Others say that this "great fish" was the name of a vessel that happened to be sailing by and picked up Jonah and put him into the hold, and kept him there three days and three nights; and they have thought this most ingenious; and so it would be if it were not as ridiculous as it is ingenious: they have thought this a most ingenious way of being rid of the difficulty. And others say the idea of supposing it was a fish at all involves a downright absurdity; and they conclude that it was a physical impossibility that any fish, however big it might be, could be competent to this; and that if it were, the man would be inevitably suffocated in the inside of the fish; and so they come at once to the conclusion—the thing is impossible—and therefore Jonah was a liar!! Then there is another class of persons who deal with the passage in a very different way. They set themselves to work deliberately and literally to *explain* it. So they tell us of a fish whose mouth was large enough to hold a ship's boat with seven men in it; and truly we must admit some of the monsters of the deep are of a prodigious size. Then they imagine that probably Jonah was preserved in the *mouth* of the fish; or if he were not preserved in the mouth of the fish, God contrived some peculiar way by which he supplied him with air whilst he was there, to support his life. Now all this appears to my mind to be the very consummation of absurdity; and the only rational explanation that I can possibly conceive is just this—it was a *simple miracle*, nothing more, nothing else. That it was the direct exercise of a divine power, that God did it, that he did it in a literal way, as it is said, "He prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

To some persons this will appear an impossible thing. Very well. If so, you must prepare yourself for the following conclusions. You must not only abandon Jonah's narrative, but you must in that same act involve the utter sweeping away of a multitude of other important facts stated in Scripture. There was nothing at all more remarkable in the fate of Jonah, than there was when Daniel was cast into the lion's den; that a man should be thrown into the midst of a number of hungry lions, and that they should be all subdued and calm in a moment. Is it at all more remarkable that Jonah should be cast into the sea and received by the whale, than that Daniel should be cast into the den and not be hurt? But still more remarkable was the casting of the three Hebrews into the burning fiery furnace, which was so furious that the men who came to the mouth of the furnace for the purpose of throwing in these devoted men, were consumed by its flames; and the three Hebrew youths stood in the midst of the furnace, and then came forth, and even the *smell* of fire had not passed upon them! Is it more remarkable than the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea? the deliverance of Noah in the ark upon the deluge? and with equal force, of our Lord's walking upon the surface of the sea? All belong to the same class; and if you give up the one, you must surrender the other; and the Bible becomes a book of lies from beginning to end. I do not hesitate to say that my belief in miracles is most perfect and complete,

so long as miracles are authentic and well attested; and I have no more reason to believe anything that is contained in the Bible than I have to believe what is written of Jonah. If I am to reject the book of Jonah, why not the book of Jeremiah? If the book of Jeremiah, why not the book of Isaiah? If Isaiah, why not Genesis and the whole Pentateuch? I must believe one and all, or I must believe nothing.

Then, observe, it is all attributed to God. It is said, "the *Lord* had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah;" so "the *Lord* spake into the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land." If I believe God created all things, and sustains all things; if I believe we are all dependent upon him for everything, I can have no difficulty in believing this miracle of God. And let me observe particularly, that there is nothing derogatory, or absurd, or trifling, or immoral, about this miracle. Its *moral* character is in perfect harmony with the character of God and his own revealed law, and is perfectly *worthy* of him. It is a very different thing from a winking Madonna, who it is said every now and then winks its eyes at the faithful! It is a very different thing from the chapel at Loretto that was seen one night to fly like a balloon to a distant spot, and then come down without a stone being displaced! It is a very different thing from the miracle said to have been wrought by St. Anthony, who preached to the people, and because they would not listen to him, went and preached to the fishes, and they all come up devoutly to listen to him! It is a very different thing from the story told of St. Dunstan, who is said to have led the devil by the nose round his room! It is a very different thing from the story told of St. Dennis, who when his head was cut off, is said to have taken it up, and to have walked round the city of Paris with it under his arm! These are fooleries that are not for a moment to be placed side by side with any one thing written in the word of God. The miracles of the Bible have a *moral* character, and there is every thing about them in harmony with common sense, and every thing promotive of the honour and glory of God. Here, then, we have presented before us the "punishment of Jonah," in the form of a miracle, which was literally fulfilled. He was afflicted at first with a hurricane, and then imprisoned in the fish, and there, it is said, he remained three days and three nights. This expression, three days and three nights, was an ordinary formula of expression that was most rife in those days. Our Lord was buried somewhere about three o'clock on Friday, and rose very early on the Sunday following; and yet he is said to have been buried "three days and three nights"—that is, a part of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and part of Sunday. And we use the same expression ourselves; if asked, "Have you been out of town this week?" "Yes," you say, "three days;" that is, you started on Monday evening, and returned on Wednesday morning. Having heard this, it is considered the person was absent three days.

II. We must hasten to consider the "*rescue of Jonah*." "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land." I should like to have an opportunity to dwell a little upon the sublime prayer that was offered up by Jonah, and that issued in his deliverance; but it must suffice to say that it is evident from his prayer that Jonah was a *good man* after all. One sin

does not make a man a profligate, and his sin was an *act* not a *habit*. The sin of Judas was his habit. It was very different from the sin of Achan, who was tempted, and yielded in a moment of temptation to take the wedge of gold.

The sin of Baalam was pre-meditated. It was very different from the sin of Jonah. But you must look at his prayer; and whilst you contemplate it, you must remember it was unpremeditated, prompted by the exigency of the case, and by his profound honour of God. Look at its spirit and its tone, its profoundness, its propriety, and its beauty, and we may truly say, such a prayer was not only never uttered from such a place, but perhaps never uttered in trouble from any other place. No doubt other saints have prayed in their extremity of sorrow and suffering. Joseph, doubtless, prayed in the pit; Daniel, doubtless, prayed in the lion's den; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prayed in the burning fiery furnace; Moses prayed in the Red Sea; Peter prayed in prison; but we have not a record of their prayers. It pleased the Spirit of God to preserve the prayer of Jonah as a model of prayer in the time of trouble; and this prayer was answered in the language of the last verse of the second chapter; and you must always connect these two verses together—the last of the first, and the last of the second. There is a compendium of the whole book. “The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah;” and “the Lord spake to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land.” How shall we believe this? One is recorded to have said that when the truth of Jonah's narrative was denied, that so strong was his faith, that if the Scriptures had said that “Jonah swallowed the whale,” he would have believed it! Such statements as these are no honour to christianity; they are rash and hasty. We are never called upon to believe such a statement as this. All the miracles of the Bible are perfectly simple; there is no violation of the law of nature or the law of God; it is merely a higher expression of that law; it is merely an exhibition of a mightier power than is generally exerted in ordinary events. The Bible, I repeat, never warrants such credulity on behalf of those who worship God. Miracles may be *beside* nature, they may be *beyond* nature, but they can never be any *violation* of nature. It can raise the dead; there is no violation in that. He that giveth life continueth life, restored life, and permitted it to continue for a brief period longer upon earth. Here again we adopt the purely literal meaning of the passage. The same power that punished Jonah delivered him; the same power that condemned, granted a respite. Thus, then, I have presented “the punishment and rescue of Jonah” rapidly and imperfectly. Would that I had more time for a thorough examination of this wonderful narration.

I must invite you now to lend me your attention whilst I endeavour to apply this narrative to our own circumstances. I have not invited you here simply to interest you in the narrative of Jonah, but to make Jonah a picture that you may gaze upon, not merely with wonder, but that you may see in it where there is any resemblance to your own character; where there is something to be avoided, and something to be imitated. And I invite you, first, to contemplate his crime. What was it? It was simply *disobedience*: just as

the crime of Eve in the garden of Eden was disobedience; not plucking the apple—there was nothing moral or immoral in that—but disobedience, resisting the will of God. It was neglect in the case of Jonah—neglecting a mission that he had been appointed by Jehovah. He was not charged with sacrilege, nor murder, nor adultery; it was simply that he knew to do good, and did it not.

We here learn, then, one great and important lesson, namely, that outward propriety, and decency, and sobriety are not enough to render us acceptable in the sight of God. It is not enough that there is all this species of virtue in our course; if there is nothing beyond this, if, notwithstanding, we live in the neglect of those duties which he requires at our hands. God is not satisfied with a negative christianity; he demands a positive obedience to his will. It is not enough to say, "I have not done evil." Have you done good? There are some persons who congratulate themselves by saying, "I am no man's enemy." It is a false principle in itself, and in its practical effects. No man can live to himself, let him try as much as he will; "evil communications corrupt good manners;" and the man who does not do good is always doing harm.

Let me urge upon you this consideration—Jonah had a mission; every man in this world has a mission from God. There is no man who can say, with the Scriptures before him, "God has not appointed me to any work." It is perfectly true that all have not such a mission as Jonah had, but all have a mission of some kind. All men have not the same opportunities and the same talents; few have the "*ten talents*," but there is not any, except the idiot and the insane that have not *one* talent. One has a mission to rectify the evils of trade; one has an evident mission to help forward what is called "the Early Closing Movement;" and I believe that the man who is in a position to accomplish that work is as much appointed, and sanctioned, and blessed of God as any man who is engaged in the mightiest mission that ever absorbed the human mind. Another is called to promote the commerce of this country; another to help science, and art, and literature; another has a mission of benevolence; another has a mission of patriotism; another has a mission of philanthropy. I believe that the man who wrought out that wonderful system of *free trade* was raised up of God as much for the accomplishment of that purpose as Luther, or Knox, or Wycliffe, or Coverdale. And I believe that the man who has condescended—nay, there is no condescension in being kind, I recall my word—the man who is kind to the ragged children—the man that can go to reclaim the licentious, and try to rescue them from their passions and vices—that man has a mission from God; and if he do it well, or if he do it to the best of his power to convert them to the grace of God, it bears upon his brow a glory greater than if he were adorned with the glittering coronet of this realm. No man can be allowed to stand idle in the market-place during the day; no man has been created to himself; the end of our creation is not that we may live happily, it is not even that we may live piously, unless you indicate in that piety an earnest anxiety for the well-being of society, and a determination, as far as possible, to do something for the good of man and the glory of God.

This is a thought that might be dwelt much upon, but I must leave it thus cursorily noticed. You have a mission—every man has a mission—the old man, the young child, has a mission—the virgin—all have a mission—and I am come to-night to ask you, do you fulfil your mission? You have received your message, your warrant, your credentials from God; are you doing his bidding? are you doing your work so that you will not have to regret it when you come to die? shall you leave the world your debtor? and if we are called to preach your funeral sermon may we justly take this text, “After he had *served his generation* in the fear of God he fell asleep?” Have we, then, any here who have shirked the duty which God has called them to? is Jonah any where to be found? is there a Jonah here? or there? or in the area below? Oh, we cannot discover you, but God can; and though you may go home to-night and say, “I shall die in my nest, I shall never be moved,” you may be pursued to the bar of God to-night. And let me say to the *parent*, you have a mission, aye, and pre-eminently a mission—are you fulfilling it? are your children the better for your example? are your children the better for your advice? are your children the better for your prayers? Yes, I must force it. I feel that the salvation of the children of this church and congregation is pre-eminently and mainly in the hands of the mother; and I ask you again, are your children the better for your prayers? Why you know you have never prayed with the children since they were born. The utmost you have done has been this, you have taught them to say their prayers, and you have told them to come to you, and say,

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.”

Oh, that is beautiful! there are many children in heaven who were first taught to lisp the Saviour’s praise, and they never forgot it. But where are you? in the church, or out of it? You say you are a christian; shew it. Oh, how many parents, like Jonah, flee from the duty which God has enjoined upon them in relation to their own children.

Young man, I ask you, are you conscientious in your moral dealings in the world? are you walking as “lights in the world?” I remember to this moment that we once received a young man to this church—he may be here for aught I know to-night—who told me that his companions in the counting house were given to the greatest ribaldry and obscene conversation, but that when he became a christian all this ribaldry was silenced. Is this the character of all the young men here to-night? are you preaching to your fellows? I do not in the popular and vulgar sense say, Are you always preaching to the wicked? There must be nothing mean, nothing equivocal, nothing hypocritical; all must be earnest, transparent; or, are you prepared to rest upon integrity and high principle, and that you say your prayers? Young man! are you fulfilling your mission?

Man of business—And there are a great many of this character amongst us—Men of business! you have a mission to London, just as Jonah had a mission to Ninevah. It may not be, like him, to utter denunciations of divine wrath.

But let British merchants and British tradesmen be what they ought to be, and they will become missionaries of Christianity, and they will become the strength and glory of their own land, and they will become missionaries of their cause to the very ends of the earth. And therefore I ask you again, christian man of business, are you discharging your mission in the circle in which you move? Jonah had a mission—he neglected it, and he was punished.

Now let us look at his punishment. A hurricane overtook him. Oh! what a heart-rending scene the other day, when that vessel was seen burning down to the water's edge, with 160 immortal beings on board—father, mother, husband, and wife, who saw on the one hand the devouring fire, and on the other hand the devouring sea! When Jonah was pursued by the tempest he was flying from the presence of God, but he could not escape the power of Him who “holds the winds in his fists.” He has but to open that fist, and the winds will pursue his adversary through time into eternity. A great fish was waiting to receive him. He received his punishment. Terrible and aggravated, his sin found him out; and you often realize that; and the Scriptures tell you, and I tell you to-night, “Be sure your sins will find you out.”

Ah! you think you have been so clever; you have managed it so admirably; you have been accumulating to yourself what is not your own; no one will discover you. But, stay till to-morrow morning; go to the office, unlock your desk, sit down and say, “I shall go on as usual.” No you will not. You fancy you have been very clever, but the punishment of God pursues you. Something you little expected has whispered to the Master, your sin is discovered, and retribution is at your heels. God was angry with Jonah; he pursued him and overtook him. And the neglect of duty will always meet with its just recompense of reward, here, very often, and always hereafter. I feel this is an awful sentiment, and that there may be something like equivocation about it; that sin is always overtaken with its appropriate punishment here and hereafter. Now I know this statement is invested with difficulties; and I presume not to predict the exact form and description of punishment that always attends certain crimes. It is not for any man to send for the minister and say, “See, sir, I have lost one thing after another, and I expect you to tell me what I have done.” Nor do I pretend to deny that it very often happens, that men sin for a time with great impunity. I admit all that, but even that does not affect the general statement—God pursues the guilty, and pursues them here and pursues them hereafter. Read at your leisure the 37th and the 73rd Psalms, and you will there find this finely, and eloquently, and pungently brought out. Are you in looking at the punishment of Jonah prepared to defy the Most High? Are you in that state of mind in which you are prepared to say, “I mean only to enjoy myself; and care nothing about the anger of God?” Are you hardy enough to rush against the thick bosses of his buckler? Are you prepared to look God in the face, and say “Who is he, that I should obey him; or what profit is there if we pray unto him?” Shall Jonah be your model as he fled from duty? Are you resolved to fly from duty also? Are the tempest and the great fish of no account to you? If not, are you prepared to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, to hear him say to you,

"Depart, ye cursed, into outer darkness, there shall be weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

But whilst I have been directing your attention to Jonah's punishment, and, Jonah's crime, let me turn to a far more congenial, and far more delightful topic—Jonah's *rescue*. "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." You are now in the grasp of some trouble—yes, I know you are. It may be that I am drawing the bow at a venture; but in this large congregation it cannot but be there are some to whom it is suited. Bound hand and foot, they are perhaps at this moment in sorrow, and in anguish and agony of mind: they have been overtaken in their course, and pursued by the vengeance of the Almighty: he has punished them. Now he that has permitted you to bring yourselves into that condition, he that has permitted others, it may be some very dear to you, to involve you in this terrible condition, he that has by his own absolute act overtaken you in your folly—he can rescue—and he will do it. Jonah was brought out of his trouble, he was placed exactly where he was when he fled from duty; he had another opportunity; the door of mercy was not shut; the day of grace was not passed; the Master of the house had not arrived and shut the door for ever. He was not in hell, he was on earth, and he had another chance. But the duty must not be avoided, through it he must go; the Lord hath spoken, and he must obey him.

Now look at the *means* of his rescue. Prayer, nothing but prayer; no sacrifice; he was beyond the reach of that; it was not in his power; he was "in the belly of hell," as the inspired writer has it—in the depths of darkness. He had nothing he *could* do but pray; he had nothing he *needed* do but pray. I believe that Judas himself, corrupt and evil as he was, if instead of rushing upon an awful eternity, had cast himself upon his knees, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," the Saviour would have smiled upon him as he did upon Peter, and he would have been the first and best of the Apostles of our Lord. Only pray—pray earnestly—pray now! Oh! am I speaking to any man bound in the chains of worldliness and in sin? Any slave of lust? Any slave of evil passion? Any slave of pride, or anything whatsoever? I say pray, pray now, and pray without ceasing! "Oh, sir, I cannot pray." What! can you not say, "Lord, what shall I do be saved?" That is enough! "God be merciful to me a sinner!" That is enough. Shout unto God; cry mightily to God, and God will pardon. Only look what examples we have of the readiness of God to hear prayer. It is as true of Jonah as it was of Daniel, that whilst he was praying, the angel, even Gabriel, came down to him; and no sooner had Jonah begun to pray than his prayer was heard and answered, and his deliverance was sure. God is as ready now as ever to forgive. "He waiteth to be gracious;" "delighteth to have mercy." Aye, and look at the resources of God. God raised the storm; God provided the great fish; God said to the leviathan, "Give up the prisoner;" the prisoner came forth in praise and triumph, and in joy. He said to the prison of his own Son, "Give up the dead." And Jesus burst the bars of death assunder; he snapped the iron sceptres of his foe; he came forth in wealth, and glory, and honour and joy. He hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and given gifts to men. The resources of

God are not exhausted, and they never can be. He is as able now as ever to save sinners. And, like Jonah, you may obtain deliverance from evil now. But remember you have the same course to pursue as him. There is no indulgence to do as you like. There is no doctrine of indulgence in the Bible. There is no doctrine of indulgence in the church of God. The only place that you can find indulgence of sin, is in the corrupt and devilish Church of Rome! God grants no indulgence to do wrong; and if you get deliverance from bondage, it is only that you may go forth the more manly to promote his honour and glory.

And let me ask, Have you wandered from God? Have you neglected your duty? Is there any wanderer here—any prodigal son? If so, now is the time to return. Return, oh, return! "He is waiting to be gracious." "He delighteth to have mercy."

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The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE PREACHING OF JONAH, AND ITS EFFECTS.

Third Lecture.

BY THE REV. CLEMENT DUKES, M.A.,

DELIVERED

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1852.

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."—JONAH iii. 4.

JONAH had been already commissioned to go to Nineveh and pronounce God's sentence against that wicked city. He attempted to flee from the presence of God, and was overtaken and punished. He is now the second time commanded to do that duty from which he had previously shrunk; and God was justified in requiring and enforcing the fulfilment of his original command; for God had required of Jonah only what was right. It was not a capricious—an arbitrary—an unjust—or an unreasonable duty required at his hand. The thing was right, was good, and after all, was pleasant and easy, and therefore, should not be resisted. He would not, and he ought not to relinquish his claim at the hands of the prophet. Jonah's resistance had been all in vain, and he had been spared only that he might redeem his former treason. And in this way we are often taught that when God requires anything at our hands, it is in vain to resist his will; do it we must. And God often spares, in order that we may recover ourselves from sin. Nineveh was still to be his destination. Many hundred miles he would have to traverse, whether on foot or not, we are not informed, but no doubt he would have to travel that weary journey with great labour. Beside this, it was evident that Jonah looked upon this mission as most offensive and most repulsive. He knew that it would involve him in probable exposure to sneer and insult, and perhaps to a violent death; but all these circumstances in no way affected his duty to God. If all these should certainly befall him at Nineveh, still his duty was to do as he was bid. His mission was not worse, nor so bad as the mission of Noah, who for one-hundred and twenty years was a preacher of righteousness, when mankind had attained to a height of infamy, pollution and sin, which has never—never been equalled. And as that mighty palace, the wonder of the world, that was erected in the course of last year, attracted the attention of thousands and hundreds of thousands, so

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the building of the ark would be the object of attraction to the district. And as often as Noah and his family were seen proceeding towards it and returning to their home, they would be liable to scorn and ribaldry, ridicule and violence. But still Noah was faithful; a preacher all his days, notwithstanding all his difficulties.

The same might be alleged of Lot, righteous Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed day by day at the iniquity of the people of Sodom; but still he was faithful to the end. Moses was accounted faithful in all his house; and though he was commissioned to go into the presence of the hard-hearted king, and ask at his hands the emancipation of his beloved people Israel, still he persevered in spite of every obstacle.

Jonah, for a long time refused the office; but when we contemplate him at last inclined to go, and approaching the walls of mighty Nineveh, oh, what a crowd of thoughts, and emotions, and conjectures and imaginations, immediately press upon the mind! Had he been espied, and had he been known, what attention would he have attracted, and what mingled feelings would have passed through the minds of the people of Nineveh as they saw him approach! One would have welcomed him perhaps with the welcome that was given to the man that announced to Jerusalem the coming glory of Israel's emancipation from captivity. Another, looking out from the walls of Nineveh, and seeing the man ascending upon foot towards the city, would have said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice, together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

And if we were permitted to indulge here a little imagination, the circumstances of the advent to a particular town, or district, or city, of some of God's favoured people—oh, with what intense interest would their person, their visit, their character, and every moment of their life be invested! And could we but take a rigid survey of the thousands of human beings that are constantly pouring into this great city of ours, how should we see a Jonah here—a Moses there—and a Paul in another place? Each man having his own character; each his own mission; and some of them bringing in their minds, bringing in their hearts, one thought, and that thought a precious seed-thought, which being cast into the popular mind, shall take root downwards, bear fruit upwards, and bring forth fruit abundantly to the honour and glory of God.

The site of the city of Nineveh is in some degree described in the chapter before us. I dwelt so much at length on this part of it—the view of the city—necessarily in the introduction of the first lecture, that I must not, though strongly tempted, dwell upon it to-night. The extent of the city, it is particularly said, was a city of "three days' journey,"—a city that would require three days to traverse. And a day's journey, by the most accomplished scholars, is estimated at about twenty of our own miles. It was probably constructed somewhat on the same principle as Babylon, though not absolutely "foursquare," as that city was; it was rather oblong than square. In all

probability, its streets stretched from wall to wall, in one unbroken line, crossing each other at right-angles, intersected from time to time by extensive gardens, spacious squares, cultivated fields, and beautiful orchards. From all we know of this ancient city, there is every reason to justify and warrant such a conclusion as this. They must have been a busy, a prosperous, and a numerous people. Everything about the whole aspect of it, and especially Jonah's first visit to it, must have filled him with amazement, and affected him with awe and with interest and emotion. There would be discovered in its then condition, no signs—no visible signs—of ruin of any description whatever. It would seem as large, as busy, as prosperous, as happy as ever it had been. There was no man had the veil removed between him and its coming ruin, Jonah, the prophet, but he foresaw it. He would have, in the discharge of his office, to choose the chief places of resort. Wherever there was a crowd, that would be the place where God would require him to discharge his office—to confront one crowd after another. And there would be everything about this man to attract attention. He was a foreigner, and he would speak not precisely the same language. In all probability he spoke the Hebrew, whilst in Nineveh they would speak the Chaldee. And though the chief difference was in the written character—the one character being of a square form, and the other angular in its construction—still there would, no doubt be enough of difference in his language, in his appearance, and in his attire, to attract the attention of every person who saw him stride through the city. He was, perhaps, a gaunt and gigantic figure, awful in his form; and he would have been selected, perhaps for this, as well as for other qualities, in order that he might be competent to the discharge of that solemn duty. Every one would be attracted; and as soon as he found he had secured the attention of any number of persons, he would stand still. Every one would see there was something upon his mind—something upon his lip—that he had a message to deliver. The curiosity of man was as ripe then as it is now; and as his mission was such as had never been discharged before, and of which they had had no kind of experience, they would suddenly rush towards him, supposing he was a philosopher, an orator, or a poet; and that he was about to interest and amuse. But he opened his commission, and the burden of his cry was this, “Yet forty days, and this great Nineveh shall be destroyed.”

It was under such circumstances as these that the prophet was required to preach, and the topic for this evening is the “*preaching of Jonah.*”

By preaching you are to understand, not a certain set form of address; it simply involves the idea of *publicly proclaiming*, or to make a message known, as the crier makes his message known to the whole village or town. This was just the object of Jonah's mission; he was “a crier;” and he had to cry at the corners of the streets, and the market-places, and wherever there was any concourse of people; he was to lift up his voice, and his message was the “destruction of Nineveh.”

And you must observe that God not only enjoined upon him the duty, but he prescribed the message; and the man must have had nothing left but the attending to the instructions given to him in the second verse, “Arise, go unto

Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Now, all the preaching to be of any value, must be just the preaching that *God bids us*. And if a man feels not in himself that he is doing God's bidding; and if the people, by turning to God's word, cannot see the message that has been delivered is a message from God, men ought not to be satisfied, nor to receive it. No man is a preacher in any valuable sense, who does not preach all and everything, and who does not preach that, and that alone, which God himself has bidden him. Jonah was not to rebuke the people; Jonah would not indulge in any expressions of spleen, and resentment, and indignation; he was to speak what God bade him. He was only the mouth-piece; he was not the water, but the well; he was not the stream, but only the channel; he was not even the herald, but the trumpet; and the breath that blew the blast was the breath of God. The burden of his preaching was this—"Yet forty days and this great city shall be destroyed." Not that we are to suppose that Jonah was restricted to these precise words, but that was the *burden* of his preaching, the *substance* of his preaching; that was to be the issue and the occasion. Whatever be the form of address, it was all to end in that; and however he might vary, however he might decorate, and however he might point it, in order to impress his address, this was to be the substance; he had but that one message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." He might explain this, he might enforce this, he might justify this, by pointing out many great and serious evils that were rife amongst them: but however he might deal with it in this way, still the burden of his cry was, the "destruction of Nineveh."

And oh! how beautiful was one element of that preaching! It was to be "forty days." Mark the difference between the dealings of God and the dealings of man. It is the fashion in France, if a man offend, away with him. He is immediately brought out—and without an opportunity of crying "God be merciful to me a sinner"—take him into the garden, or square, and shoot him like a dog! But look at the conduct of God. Nineveh—bold, base, bad Nineveh must have "forty days" at least! Look at the history of the deluge. *A hundred and twenty years* was allowed for that generation to repent, and to hear the preacher of righteousness. Look again at the case of Lot. Look again at the history of the Jews. Look again at the history of Egypt; not one plague, not one demand on the part of Moses—"Let my people go;" and when refused, to hurl the thunderbolt of Jehovah's vengeance at him and his people—but he sent plague after plague, stroke after stroke, invitation after invitation, warning, after warning, before they were utterly overwhelmed.

Oh! infidel, look at the character of the God whose gospel we preach. There never has been any king, any man conceived either by the imagination of the poet, or described by the pen of the philosopher, or historian, whose dealings have had any kind of approach to the glory, the justice, the equity, and the forbearance of God! "Forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Only imagine yourself to be intrusted with such a mission as this; try and put yourself in such a position; how awful would appear the advent of such a man with such a mission.

But I must hasten from his preaching, to its "effects." And its first im-

pression is on "the people." Yes! it is easy to sneer at "the people," to call them the "lower order," "the vulgar," "the swinish multitude," but it is the people always, when there is any good, that are the first to receive it. "It was the common people that heard him gladly." And it has always been so. "The people," the mass, the millions, are the people who have the great mass of mind, and thought, and intellect, and soul. It was the people who believed, and "*believed God*?" they lost sight of Jonah, as every hearer should lose sight of the preacher, they should think of the *message*, and not of the *messenger*. They believed God. But this was not all. "The word came also unto the king." He did not hear it for himself; kings are greatly to be pitied. There are no men have such trouble to get to heaven as kings; there are no men that have so many perils to encounter as kings. There are pride and prejudice; there are persons constantly surrounding them whose business it is to keep them from light, from every thing that would affect the understanding, that would move the heart. They know that if the king were wise, if the king were pious, a part of their craft would be gone; and so it was on this occasion. The king had no chance of hearing this preacher; perhaps he never saw Jonah. It may be that the report was not carried to him, until Jonah had completed his mission, and fled away. But fortunately for the king, (not so much fortunately for the people,—for the people would have repented, and did without the king,) but the message was carried to him, he did not hear it for himself; the saying of this prophet was reported to him. Need I stay to ask what this man's name was? It would be a loss of time; but I shall explain hereafter, why it is that the entire history of this man is so obscure, and so utterly fades away in the midst of a deep, dark antiquity. But whether we know his name or not, we know a great deal about this man, that is, we are made perfectly familiar with his Government, and you cannot conceive of anything more despotic than the government of this man. He had power to make his own feelings, his own wish, the law of the entire community. This may be a consistent mode of government, when the head of the government is God, but not when the head of the government is man. When man is wise enough, when man is good enough, when man is sufficiently free from prejudice and pride to be entrusted with the destiny of the community, it may do very well. And yet this man's power was so boundless, that he could order "*a fast*." What a farce! that the prince could order a fast, and tell the people they must put on sackcloth, and be very penitent! The absurdity of it is seen in this; he could only exact the *outward* and not the *inward*, but God cares not for the sheep's clothing, he looketh at the heart; and to command a nation to play the hypocrite, is not to honour God; nor is it to promote any good whatever! The same power that enabled him to order a *fast*, could enable him also to order a *feast*. He could by the same authority command that an idol be made part of gold, part of silver, and part of iron, and part of clay, or all of gold, or of wood, or of clay. He might have commanded a crusade, or an holy inquisition. No man, therefore, ought in any circumstance to have committed to him the power of making his own will the law, and to say, as Louis 14th did, *L'etat c'est moi*.

He happened on this occasion, to favour Jonah. But it was possible he might have frowned upon him; and as his will followed with approbation the mission of Jonah, so his will might have been the destruction of Jonah, and of Jonah's influence. It does not appear to have been, however, as far as the king was concerned, the result of any pressure from without; he had not at all to meet the will of the people, to gratify it, for the people were evidently before him, but it was the simultaneous, and the spontaneous act of his own mind. He had heard all about this man, and it filled him with consternation, and then he pursued the course here indicated. Now, we may look at his conduct, and shall find it very much to his credit. You observe, it is said, "He arose from his throne," that is the first thing, laid aside his dignity and state, "he laid his robe from him," put off all his princely raiment, and covered himself, though he was a prince, "with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, "Let neither man, nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water." All this was an indication of the sincerity and earnestness and intense desire of this man's heart to please God, and ward off destruction from his mighty but devoted city. But beside having an account of his *conduct*, we have also a distinct intimation of what his *opinions* were. If you ask, what this king of Nineveh thought about worship, about the system of faith; we have hints enough furnished in the passage to lead us to a just and comprehensive conclusion. His notions were, (and no doubt they were the popular opinions of the day,) concerning worship in general; that when sin had been committed, there should be fasting, and sackcloth, and prayers, and turning from the evil way, and from violence. Now, there had been "violence in their hands," and there had been "an evil way," amongst that people.

This will lead us to a comprehensive impression of the case, that will help the imagination to go any length in anything you can conceive to be consistent with the polite and fashionable conduct of that city. The king had sense enough to see that there was a God; that that God was a righteous being; that he took notice of the affairs of men; was affected by their sins; and that he might be propitiated by their repentance, and by their devotedness to his service. Here, then, we have the indication of his conviction, shame, and amendment; and these three things constitute essential elements in what we understand by the word repentance. Nothing was to be wanting in its expression: he ordered the cattle to be brought home from the fields, and to be tied up, or confined in the fold; without one particle of food, or a drop of water. There was heard the lowing of the ox, the bleating of the sheep and goat, together with the cry of anguish of the people, "clothed in sackcloth and sitting in ashes." Never was there seen such a valley of weeping, or city of repentance, as was there presented as the result of the preaching of Jonah! Oh! what a scene must that have been! and how are we to account for it? It may be said by the ribald sceptic, "The thing is absurd—the thing is impossible." It may be to his judgment, but not to those who candidly read and think for themselves. No man imagines that ever the various connected cir-

cumstances would lead to the conclusion—this was fictitiously described. The Ninevites must have heard a great deal said about the dealings of God with Israel; because the Ninevites were on one side, and the Egyptians on the other; and the Israelites about midway between these two great empires; they must, therefore, have been acquainted with the deliverance of Israel; they must have heard of the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea; the destruction of the Canaanites, the Moabites, and the Midianites, and all the rest of the border tribes that had been compelled to submit to the power of the God of Israel. And what was there to prevent the ship-master—the man that commanded the vessel in which Jonah sailed—and what was there to prevent the crew of that vessel giving their testimony in reference to the wonders of that night when Jonah, at his own bidding, was cast into the deep, and there was a great calm? They might have heard all these things, and when Jonah came, the people pointed to him and said, “This is the man—the very Jonah—the man that was in the vessel and cast into the sea, that was there received by a great fish, and in due time landed upon the shore, and now is risen again and come to Nineveh, and we have his mission.” But besides this, the circumstances of Jonah altogether were such as would invest him with wonderful power. The fact that he was a messenger of God, that God was with him, and he was doing God’s bidding, would ensure the man wonderful success. Think of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: conceive of his going into the Temple, amidst the proud and haughty Jews; doing that which above all other things would be most offensive to a money-getting and a money-loving people—throwing over the tables of the money-changers, letting loose all the doves that were brought to be sold for sacrifices, casting out all the buyers and sellers! How was it the people did not turn indignant, and that they did not destroy him? It was the greatest miracle ever performed. But what was it gave him this authority? “He spake as one having authority.” There was something God-like about him that made the people fear him. And there must have been the same kind of thing about the character and demeanour of Jonah, that when he opened his mouth, he commanded attention. We have seen something like this in modern times, when a Whitefield, single-handed, could command the attention of the lawless multitude—when a Whitefield, standing upon a chair, or table, or cart, lifted up his mighty voice and shook his mighty hand—when the persons present were as lewd, and violent, and lawless as ever disgraced the human mind!—preaching to 20,000 people, and 20,000 people listening in calm wonderment and delight! We, I say, can perfectly understand how it was that Jonah was able to secure attention, and by the blessing of God to secure such results.

Many questions might be asked here about the character of their repentance. You see how subjects keep rising to the surface in the whole of this narrative; and how interesting each one is in its turn. Many persons, and some, too, who have paid anything like close attention to the doctrines of the gospel, would ask, what *kind* of repentance was this, and how long did it last? was it *evangelical*? was it the repentance unto death, or the repentance unto everlasting life? We cannot tell what was the exact character of their

repentance. It is enough for our purpose this evening just to remark it served the occasion, it answered the purpose, the city was spared, and not destroyed. And then if I may just in two or three sentences, I would refer to its subsequent history. It was spared, "it repented God," but did not last very long, for very soon afterwards, we are told, it relapsed into its former state. It was besieged for three years by Arbaces the Mede, and was taken. It was not *then* destroyed. The city was continued, and its idolatry returned and prevailed. During that period the prophet Nahum, whose wonderful writings we read to you at the beginning of the first lecture, uttered his terrible denunciations in reference to this wonderful city. He delivered his burden—the burden that was laid upon him by Jehovah against Nineveh. The city survived long after this, being taken by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, after about 150 years. It was finally destroyed about 625 years before the coming of Christ. Is it at all remarkable that there should be uncertainty about the history of Nineveh when it is known that this city was destroyed, and in ruins, for more than 200 years before the days of Herodotus, who is described as "the father of history,"—the first man who wrote authentic secular history.

The date of this celebrated historian was only a little more than 400 years before Christ, so that Nineveh had been rotting 600 years before the commencement of our era, and has been laid waste from that day until now; and if you look into books written about Nineveh, written twenty years ago, you will find there was a contest whether Nineveh was on the east or the west of the Tigris, so completely was it obliterated; and Lucian speaks of it as having so perished that "no vestiges of it remain, nor can it easily be ascertained where formerly it stood."

But now we proceed to another question. Can we justify what is here designated the *repentance of God*? "It repented the Lord." There might be a great deal, perhaps, said about the repentance of *man*, but what are we to make of the repentance of *God*? It is a phrase very frequently occurring in the word of God. We may say in reference to his repentance in this particular case that the equity and the propriety of it cannot be questioned. We cannot see how God could have done otherwise than he did in sparing the people upon their repentance; nothing can be even speciously asserted in reference to this department of divine government, except the absolute character of Jonah's message, because Jonah said, without any restriction or qualification, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." If anything can be called in question it was the *message of Jonah*, not the *mercy of God*; and yet we must say in vindication of this message that God himself had absolutely said just what he permitted Jonah to say—it was the mind of God, the intention and will of the Most High, that in forty days Nineveh, being impenitent, should perish. He received from heaven this absolute denunciation, and therefore it was only right and just, under the circumstances, that it should be thus absolutely proclaimed. And here we are forcibly reminded that all the threatenings of God are *conditional*. Any man—I say this without any kind of reservation—and if I had the voice of a trumpet I would proclaim it any where, *that any man may avert any judgment of heaven he pleases by repentance*; and if

there be any questioning of this, I point to Sodom and Gomorrah. God spoke to faithful Abraham and told him, "If there were found in that guilty city fifty righteous persons he would not destroy it." Abraham knew God well. Immediately he repaired to his favourite place of devotion, and there he prayed, and God heard him. He asked God this, "Lord, spare Sodom if there be fifty righteous in it." And the Lord said he would if there should be fifty righteous. He then came down to forty, thirty, twenty, ten, and five : and the Lord said, "If there be five righteous persons in the city he would not destroy it." But there was not five ; if there had been, notwithstanding the threatened judgment, notwithstanding the iniquity of the people, in consideration of the prayer—the pure believing prayer of Abraham—this city would have been spared. And all God's judgments are of this conditional character. They are only meant for the wicked so long as they continue impenitent.

But still how does the idea of repentance square with the perfect character of God? "He changeth not," is the description we have of him in the word of God. We answer, that this word, like every other word that is at all human, is an *accommodation* ; if God were to speak to us in spiritual terms he might just as well be silent, because we could not understand him. Our words are *signs of things* ; and it is only as the sign of the thing is associated together and recognised, it is only so far that we can understand the use of language at all. If God's dealings were spoken of in their pure spiritual form they would be incomprehensible to our gross and mortal minds. It is, therefore, an *accommodation*. God's *conduct* often changes—here is the point—his *mind* changes never. God's *doings* are determined by *man's character*. There is a natural and a necessary correspondence between them ; earth gives a complexion to heaven. God is in relation to us what we compel him to be. In all *physical* things God is no respecter of persons ; his dealings are absolute ; he does not pour his rain and sun, and all the bounties of his providence, upon one nation because it happens to be good, and withhold it from another because it happens to be evil ; but his rain descends upon the evil as well as upon the good. Now it is only because God is no respecter of persons. But in things *moral* we must deal with them according to their deserts, and according to their character. Now this is a point of so much importance that I must just read you a passage out of the 2nd Sam. xxii. 25—"Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his eyesight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright thou wilt shew thyself upright ; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury ; and the afflicted people thou wilt save ; but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down." You perceive, therefore, that we make God in his dealings with us just what we are in our relation to him. God did not *alter his mind* in the case before us, but Nineveh *altered its conduct*. And I cannot conceive of any illustration by which I can make this plain except the following. You have sometimes seen a cloud on a very beautiful day pass between the earth and the sun, which casts a shadow as it sails along ; and you can follow that

shadow with your eye ; and as the shadow of the cloud is affected by the inequalities of the earth's surface, although the cloud itself moves in a still, unbroken line, so the dealings of God are disturbed by the irregularities of men ; but God himself is undisturbed in his mind for ever. The change which is intended to be described by the word *repentance* does not mean any change in the mind of God, but in his conduct towards those with whom he is dealing.

Thus, I think, that I have referred as rapidly as I could, to most of the important sentiments involved in the preaching of Jonah, and its effects upon the people. Let me next direct your attention to its relation to ourselves—the preaching of God's servants, and its effects upon the people. There are three grand instruments recognised in the present day of public address ; any one of them contains more real power to do good than all the armies and the appliances of government, political and other that are known to exist in the world. Any one of these, I say, is stronger than all the specious resources that government can bring to bear upon the destiny of the people. The three things that I refer to are the *pulpit*, the *platform*, and the *press*. Of these I need not say, notwithstanding all the sneers of the present day, and notwithstanding all that is asserted about the “eclipse of the pulpit,” and about the priesthood of the press, and the platform, I say notwithstanding all this, the pulpit is the instrument which God has appointed, and which is invested with the power and authority for the salvation of mankind. “It is by the foolishness of preaching it hath pleased God to save them that believe.” It is this by which a people that is cast down in ignorance and sin is to be lifted up into manhood, is to be raised from the dunghill, and clothed with purple and fine linen, and sit amongst princes.

The other two are noble supplements, they are most glorious auxiliaries. The pulpit itself is more indebted to the *press* than to all the ministers that have ever been raised up to sustain it. And the *platform* is now a means of bringing truth and light into contact with the people, that bids fair to be a mighty competitor in the race of regeneration and improvement. We admit that all these have been grievously abused—the pulpit as well as the press—and the press as well as the platform. A bad man may get into the best pulpit that was ever built. Bad men may get on to the platform, and bad men may wield the press ; so that it shall bear to the world thoughts of the most immoral, degraded, and pernicious character. But notwithstanding this, these are the great instruments which God has appointed to elevate the people, to regenerate the world.

Here we might fairly, without at all departing from the topic of the night, introduce something like a discussion upon the nature of preaching—but I must forbear. It must suffice for the present purpose, to say that preaching—especially in these days—must be *manly*. It must have no sickly sentimentality about it ; it must be a manly, fearless assertion of the truth of God : it must be “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little.” It must be a continuous, not a spasmodic effort. It must be brought into contact with the same mind, until it is burnt in, until it is thoroughly stereotyped,

and is a sort of daguerreotype of the truth as it is in God, imprinted upon the heart, the conscience, and the understanding of the man.

But then above all, brethren, it must be **SCRIPTURAL**. We must preach the truth that *God* bids us, or we had better be silent. Oh! there is that beautiful passage—I think in the book of Acts—it was the first I ever addressed to the people out of which this congregation has grown. It was this—(I shall never forget it)—It was just such a message as any people might send, inviting a minister to come among them as their pastor. It at once describes the kind of ministry they expected, and the spirit they cherished.—“Now, then, are we all here present, to hear all things commanded thee of God.” And the people should readily enough stand up and say, “Have you a message from God?” “No! I have a message from philosophy.” “Then we have nothing to say to you.” The minister ought to be silent for ever, nor dare to waste one golden hour in preaching anything but the message that God hath sent him to deliver. Oh! brethren, it is useless—worse than useless—to quote from the fathers, or from German philosophy, and to deal in the mighty discoveries of modern times, except as those things may be made to bear upon the message of God to man.

There is nothing that *should* be acceptable to man, there is nothing that *can* be acceptable to God, and is worthy to be called preaching, but the message that God has bidden us deliver. A man must not preach himself, a man must not preach his calling, a man must preach Christ—Christ first—Christ last—Christ midst, and without end; Christ all, and in all. The grand theme of the minister must be “the cross of Christ.” Just as the apostle Paul said—and he was a learned man, and could have expatiated with power upon philosophy and other things—nobly said,—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The gospel is the power of God, and there is no other system that has power with God to save the soul but the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is only as the ministry is saturated with this, that it contains any element of strength. The ministry without it, will always be as it always has been—*powerless*, though eloquent. The modern attempts to give the minister a priestly character, is an indication of gross absurdity, and the most perfect ignorance of the character of God, and the gospel, and the means of everlasting salvation. The modern attempts to give the minister a priestly character and function, is absurd as well as unscriptural. The minister succeeds only as a preacher; he may be a priest if you please, but his being a priest will never save a soul. It is not the priestly function in all those who call themselves priests, though they should prove their succession from the apostle Peter without one single link being broken or polluted; their succession from Peter could give them no power. They are not to be successful in elevating the people, as priests, but as preachers; and it is only as we preach what Christ bids, not what the church dictates; it is only as we hold up the cross, and trample under foot the crucifix; it is only as we speak of the divine, and utterly disregard the human, that we can preach with success. And the only means that have been successful in snatching people from degradation, ignorance, and sin, have been, not the exhibition of the priestly order, but the simple preaching of Christ and him crucified. Think of that wonderful chapter out of which I read, (1 Cor. i.,) and let all remember it; not merely the men who attach so much importance to baptism, but the men who attach so much importance to the priestly succession, and all the various orders of the ministry amongst men. The apostle Paul says, “I was not sent to baptise, I was sent to preach the gospel.” That was his mission! now if there is any man that can say there is nothing in Christianity, that warrants a man to say, “I was not sent to preach the gospel, but to baptise,” and if people are to be saved by being baptised, or by being confirmed, by belonging to this community or that community, or to that establishment, then I have no more to say. Jonah succeeded as a preacher.

Paul succeeded as a preacher; Christ succeeded as a preacher; Wycliffe succeeded as a preacher; Luther succeeded as a preacher; and all the reformers succeeded as preachers. Now this is essentially part of the subject before us to-night; Jonah was a preacher, and he was commanded to preach the things that God bade him. And look at the effects of it. It produced repentance; a respite of "forty days" granted to the prophet in order to afford opportunity for amendment. And what the result of preaching is to be everywhere is this—they must believe the message; they must alter their lives; they must forsake their sins—they are to *repent*. It is a rational, it is a necessary, it is a wholesome, a manly, honourable, and amiable state of mind. To live in sin, without repentance, is an indication of extreme grossness of mind, and the most perfectly blunted sensibilities. But upon this I must not dwell, though I cannot part with the subject without one word more.

We have here the character of the God whom we serve; and I say to the sceptic,—the man that stands in any doubt about the character of our Bible—look at the character of that God as represented here; look at that God in relation to Nineveh and the mission of Jonah, and the success of that mission. We have the forbearance of God towards Nineveh, and the forbearance of God towards Jonah, both of them wonderful manifestations of the divine character. No man, if he had been inventing the tale, would ever have had the thought come into his mind that Jonah, having manifested such wicked conduct, should have been saved, and then entrusted with such a mission, and meet with such success. But such are the ways of God—"God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts."

Then look also at his sending such a message. This message was intended to condemn, to alarm, and to deliver. Look at his granting "forty days" to bring them to repentance. It was an invitation to accept the warning that should lead to deliverance, and happiness, and heaven. See how easily God was appeased; the people only placed themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and cried for pardon, and God's anger was turned away. Look at his rich unbounded forgiveness. The city was spared for at least 150 years after the denunciation of Jonah, and all because the God we serve "delighteth to have mercy;" and with him "judgment is a strange work."

Is there not something in this to inspire the preacher with confidence, and the hearts of the hearers with growing gratitude and praise? Oh! brethren, when I think of Jonah, and think of his preaching to Nineveh; when I think of his success, I come to this place with a warm heart, and feel it is no arrogance; it is taking nothing to myself, to imagine that by preaching the Word which God has bidden me to this large assembly, every soul if he will but look to God for pardon and peace, shall certainly obtain it. "God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked." It would be more to his glory and his praise that every wicked man should repent and believe. But, brethren, let me conclude by a fact in relation to Nineveh. It is said that the Pharisees said to our Lord on one occasion, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." He answered and said unto them, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah: and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

JONAH'S PETULANCE AND GOD'S MERCY.

Fourth Lecture.

BY THE REV. CLEMENT DUKES, M.A.

DELIVERED

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, 1852.

"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."—JONAH iii. 10; iv. 1—3.

LAST Sabbath evening we left Nineveh "fasting, covered with sack-cloth; and sitting in ashes." The entire city—a population amounting well nigh to a million, all in sadness—all in sackcloth! Such a scene cannot be paralleled. History furnishes no such display of penitence as this. We might have looked for it after the great plague of London; we might have expected it after the great fire of London; but there was no such expression of sorrow and penitence exhibited even in our own city, though these events happened many, many years after the Reformation. How soon Jonah's message took effect, or how long he continued his preaching in Nineveh, we cannot tell. It might have been all comprehended and completed in the "three days" referred to in the former part of the book; or he may have continued about the streets of the city, urging his appeal, and warning the people of the coming judgments of the Most High. As the "forty days," however, drew to a close, Jonah withdrew, in order to watch the issue of his own proclamation. He had not been told in what form Nineveh was to be destroyed; whether it was to be by water, or by fire, or by earthquake, or by the sword of the enemy, or by pestilence, or a multitude of events; he had received no intimation of this; but he knew that all these were the messengers of God, and must do his bidding; and as "He spake and it was done—commanded and it stood fast" at the creation, so, in reference to Nineveh, he had but to utter the word, and ruin would follow.

If we may suppose that no intimation was conveyed to the people of Nineveh as to the fact that God was propitiated—that the destruction was not to take place in consequence of their repentance—the most intense anxiety must have prevailed when the sun dawned on the fortieth day from the coming of Jonah;

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and the whole of that day must have been spent in the intensest anxiety; for as they saw the great orb of day about to go down in the west, they would imagine that as his light was extinguished, so Nineveh would perish. But when all was peaceful and safe—no cry of danger, no utterances of anguish and of woe—their apprehension and their terror must have given place to joy, gratification and delight. The intelligence that we have received from the West Indies of the scene that transpired on that night when slavery ceased—from the eight hundred thousand slaves in the British dominions, we are told, that there arose from those beautiful islands, a shout, such perhaps as had never ascended up to heaven before—so vast, so universal, and so joyous! And surely when Nineveh was spared, life was prolonged, mercy was awarded, there must have been a thrill of joy pass through every heart! The mother would cling to her spared babe with more than usual gratitude, and affection, and delight—and all the members of the family would stretch forth the hand of congratulation; and in every eye there would be the tear of joy, and on every countenance the expression of gratitude and praise. And it may be, (we have no information of this in the narrative,) it may be that Jonah, who had published their approaching ruin, was commanded to proclaim their reprieve, their forgiveness. The Book only says, "And he did it not." What were the circumstances connected with the forbearance and the forgiveness of God, we are not told. The entire amount of history upon this matter is, "He did it not." But there must have been at some time, either before the fortieth day, or after it, some communication made from heaven—it may be through Jonah—to the people of Nineveh, to inform them that their alarm had been groundless; that their repentance had been accepted before God, and that Jonah was not a deceiver; that he had not been on a commission of his own. But how may we suppose that the forbearance of God was received on this solemn occasion? Whatever may have been its reception by the people of Nineveh, surely no one would more rejoice in their salvation than the man of God who had been sent out to them with the threatening of heaven. Alas! alas! our charity in this case is all in vain. The only spirit displayed by the prophet on this occasion, was a grievous and disgusting petulance. He was not merely disappointed in the issue, but mortified by it, and quarrelled with God, and quarrelled with his own life; he yielded himself to the rage of a disappointed and ruined gambler, because the utterances he had made had not met with the doom he had expected. Oh! what a contrast between Jonah and Abraham, who, when he heard that Sodom was to be destroyed, ceased not to plead with God until he supposed his plea was accomplished. He seems to have been intruding—he seems almost to have manifested an insult to the God of heaven, so earnest, and profound, and importunate was he in his efforts for the pardon of Sodom, and its rescue from the impending ruin. But Jonah had published their coming doom—their repentance averted it, and then he was angry with God for his mercy.

Now we have a striking description of the state of this man's mind under these circumstances. "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not

this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." What a picture have we of a *prophet*! He was worse, in the spirit he manifested, than a common hangman, who expecting a large number of victims, and finding that they had all been pardoned, expressed his indignation and regret that there was no food for the noose—no victim for the scaffold! And bad as the hangman may be, Jonah was worse; for he was offended with God, because the denunciation against Nineveh was not carried into awful effect. And in this state of mind we are told that Jonah "prayed," actually *prayed*. Whether he fell upon his knees or not, we cannot tell, but he prayed, prayed in a passion, and prayed *because* he was in a passion! What an idea must he have had of prayer! What a monstrous perversion have we here of that holy privilege of prayer! And how improper in its sentiment. It has no redeeming feature; it was as bad as it could be. There was nothing to extenuate, just as there was nothing to warrant its harshness. The only natural and the only rational feeling that ought to have been expressed, was the directly opposite to that displayed by Jonah on this occasion. We should have looked for joy, and gratitude, and sympathy. Nor should we have been surprised if he had rushed through the city, preaching pardon and peace, where he had so recently proclaimed destruction. We should have expected this from a *man*, to say nothing about a *religious* man; and, thanks be to God, we have this beautiful fact recorded, that "there is joy in heaven," whatever may be the feelings of man upon earth, "over one sinner that repenteth."

It would seem that Jonah was irritated only because destruction was withheld. He had not even the poor excuse that those that had been spared were his own enemies, when he utters his charge against God—nay, we rejoice in this charge. "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee O Lord, was not this my saying when I was in my own country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." He admits he had no confidence in God's word, when that word announces judgment against the wicked, because it was possible for the wicked to repent, and judgment to be averted.

Now let us look at the principle involved in the plea of Jonah. He would have had God strictly fulfil his word at any rate whatever; admitting no extenuation, granting that nothing whatever could justify the withdrawal of the threat. Who was his model? Darius, the king, who was cajoled by his courtiers into issuing a most unrighteous command, that no one in his realm should worship any God or man but himself, for thirty days, in order to involve Daniel, the favourite of the king, and the hated of the court, in destruction. And the king, out of regard for his own word, allowed the best man in his realm, to gratify the caprice of a wicked and abandoned court, to be cast into the den of lions! And Jonah would have had God imitate the conduct of a wicked king who lived in after ages—Herod—the king, who in order to gratify

the daughter of his harlot when she danced before him and pleased him greatly, promised to give her whatever she should ask, even to the half of his kingdom. So she asked the head of John the Baptist in a charger. And he being a *very conscientious* man, said, "For my oath's sake, and them which sit with me at meat, it shall be given her." Jonah wanted to apply the same principle to the government and character of God. God had said, "Within forty days and the city shall be destroyed;" and therefore come what may, to gratify the caprice of Jonah, the whole city was to be swept away! God must do wrong according to the dictate of the prophet, in order to gratify him; because God in his judgment had committed himself to this course by the mouth of his servant. But was God open to any censure in his proceedings in this case? Had God in any righteous and just sense committed himself to such a course? The real secret of Jonah's anger was not a regard for God's honour, otherwise he would have rejoiced in the vindication of this honour by the display of his mercy. He was actuated by his low selfishness, and by his mortified vanity. His word did not appear to be considered inevitable—it was not absolute. He would not look at the *reason* of God's doings, but simply at the *fact*. He felt compromised. God ought in his judgment to have been as good as his word; so he was in a passion, and grew furious, and "wished he was dead," and out of the way; that there was no reliance to be placed upon the God in whose service he had been employed. The Psalmist wrote, "I said in my haste, all men are liars." Jonah cannot make this excuse; he was not speaking in haste, but deliberately; he had forty days to think of it; and yet he deliberately charged God foolishly in the language now under consideration.

We are now to have the scene transferred to the outside of the city. And eminent scholars say that we ought to read the 5th verse in the following way,—"So Jonah *had* gone out of the city." The error is in our version, not in the text itself. Jonah *had* gone out of the city—was a thing that had been already accomplished: but we need not spend time in discussing this matter. God condescended to an interview with Jonah. "Then said the Lord"—now that he was outside the city sulking, in a rage against God, God condescended to come to him, and say—"Dost thou well to be angry?" And in the 9th verse, "And God said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry?" And he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." Jonah had chosen the east side of the city, as the position most favourable for his purpose. Perhaps it offered the most convenient eminence from which he might take a large survey of that great city. Be this as it may, it was evidently a very exposed position. He was open to the heat of the morning sun, and to the searching east wind; and the spot appears to have furnished no adequate shelter by day; so he gathered the branches of trees, and with them built himself a booth. He was too angry to accept the elegant accomodation that the city offered him, for the people being under such obligation to God and to Jonah, from the prince on the throne to the meanest peasant of his realm, would have offered to him the best that they possessed with a cheerful heart,—but no; he was in a rage with God, and with the whole affair, and determined to go out and to dwell alone, and to be revenged even upon himself, for what he conceived to be a slight put upon him by Jehovah.

Now whilst in this state of mind, God condescended to reprove, to instruct, and, it may be, to propitiate the prophet with a *practical parable*. It would appear, that near the booth he set up, there was a gourd in the first stage of its growth, having no leaves upon it. But some one will feel inclined to say, What kind of a plant was this gourd? All we know of it, is this. It is supposed to be the plant that was called the *palma Christi*—the palm of Christ. It is the plant from which we get castor oil. It grows to its full height—about the height of an olive tree, from ten to thirteen feet, in about three months. It has very large broad leaves, and forms a very secure shelter to any who repose beneath it. It was easily destroyed, like all other fast growing shrubs or

trees; there was not much substance in it; and it is still known to exist and abound in that locality to the present day. You may see drawings of this plant in any of the pictorial illustrated copies of the Bible. This gourd appears suddenly to have put forth its leaves most luxuriantly, to the great comfort of the prophet. He had been previously scorched through his frail tabernacle; and when he perceived in the morning the difference between the tent of that day, and the tent of the previous day, he went out to see the cause of this change; and when he discovered the gourd he was struck. "He said it was a gourd that had suddenly put forth its leaves, and he was exceedingly glad." He was easily offended, and it appears that a very trifling thing could please him greatly; and it appears that that gourd putting forth its branches and favouring him so greatly, was a cause of exceeding joy; just as the salvation of Nineveh was a cause of exceeding anger. This is a cardinal point in the history of the man now under consideration. The impression produced upon his mind upon the discovery of the gourd was the effect intended to be brought about by the goodness of God. It was to teach him to value and appreciate the timely relief that had been thus mercifully supplied.

The next step in the practical parable was that the gourd that grew up in a night, withered in a night. He that sent the great fish to swallow up Jonah, now sent the little worm to gnaw into the root of the gourd, so that it withered and perished in a single night. All resources are at the bidding of God, the great Leviathan, that plays in the mighty waters, and the little worm that burrows beneath the soil—everything is doing the bidding of God in the armies of heaven and upon the face of the earth.

When the shelter was removed there arose a hot east wind. This may seem to some a contradiction in terms; the wind was hot because it traversed the vast tropical continent and gathered heat at every step, for the wind always partakes of the character of the surface over which it passes. Our west wind is a wet wind because it has to traverse the great Atlantic; the south-west wind is the wettest of all because it comes from the boundless ocean and finds nothing to interfere with the mist that is carried upon its wings. This hot east wind, united with the morning sun, seems to have fairly overpowered the prophet, and he fainted under their influence. Again, "he wished he was dead." It seems to be the infirmity of this man, as soon as any trouble comes, "I wish I was dead." Just as we sometimes meet with persons of the same character in the present day, if they cannot have their own way, no matter how trifling the object is that interferes with their wishes, they immediately cry, "I wish I was dead." Let them take care lest God should grant their desire. This, then, was another great point in the parable through which God was instructing Jonah. God asked him now in relation to this, "Doe'st thou well to be angry for the gourd?" and he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." So that he was prepared not only to do wrong, but to justify his wrong doing even in the face of God himself. But then comes the grand issue—then said Jehovah, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd,"—he was sorry to part with it, he felt that its loss was a calamity, but he felt no remorse whatever in the contemplation of the destruction of nearly a million of immortal beings—"thou hast had pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," that is, infants, "and also much cattle?" And here the whole scene closes. How long Jonah survived, where he went, when he wrote his book, and all the other circumstances that curiosity would prompt us to enquire into, are fatally and for ever concealed from our view. All that God intended to teach the world was taught when he came to that point that closes this eleventh verse.

Now look at the narrative so far as I have been able to present it before

you. What estimate may we form of the personal character of Jonah? was he a good man? or was he not? All prophets were not good men; all persons called to any office by Jehovah have not been good men. Saul was anointed, at the command of God, to be king over Israel, but he was not a good man; Balaam the prophet was not a good man; and many other instances of a similar character might be adduced. Was Jonah, or was he not, a good man? By stretching charity to the very verge we may *hope*, perhaps we ought not to *assert*, we may hope he was a good man, but sadly peevish and ill-tempered. It may be that his *heart* was *right*—I think it was, but I am not sure—it may be that his heart was right, but his *temper* was sadly *wrong*; and if he was a good man, then we have an awful illustration of the meaning of that passage, “a fly in the pot of oil causeth it to send forth a stinking savour.” Many a man, otherwise to be loved, having many things about his character interesting and useful, has the whole marred by some grievous, and gross, and offensive failing. Many a man, I say, having great infirmities shall be saved at last by a very extraordinary kind of salvation—they *are* saved, but “*so as by fire*.” It seems as if they escaped only without the consequences of death—as if they passed so near to the verge of that place where “the fire is never quenched,” that its flames scorch them ere they arrive at their happy destination. They are saved—that is all! There is a great difference in the degree of salvation; some are favoured to enjoy an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God; by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they are received with a loud and gladsome welcome, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

Then we have this thought set forth in the parable of the talents. The man that had ten talents, and doubled them, received great honour; whilst those that had talents and did not fully employ them, were met with the frown of the Eternal. The religion of all men is not of the same degree, it is of the same character. There are babes in Christ, and there are fathers and mothers in Christ; and if Jonah were a good man, he was a good man of the very lowest and feeblest order, for his character was so disfigured, and enfeebled by his temper, as to mar the beauty of the whole man. Nothing can excuse his irritability on this occasion, and nothing can make his salvation possible, but the description which he himself has furnished of the character of the God of heaven. “For I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”

And what shall we say of the character of the great God as here displayed? Can any thing exceed the gentleness, the forbearance, and the lovingkindness of his dealings with his wayward servant? Oh if we were inclined to think of God as a “hard master,” we have only to think of God in his dealings with Jonah, and in his dealings with Nineveh, to feel that notion instantly corrected.

Taking a general survey of this subject, it presents to our minds three objects for profound contemplation; and especially in relation to each other, the three objects set before us in the four chapters of this book, are *God*, the *prophet*, and the *people*. As we are chiefly interested in knowing how the office of the prophet affected the *relation* of the people to God—I say the connecting link between God and Nineveh—it is of the first importance for us to ascertain how his character affected the relation that subsisted between God and Nineveh. Could the petulance of the prophet in any way modify the salvation of the people? And be it remembered that the prophet was duly authorized—he was not a man hired as Balaam was by Balak, to go and curse the people. His appointment was direct from the God of heaven. There was no kind of irregularity about it. “God said unto Jonah, arise, go to Nineveh.” Now it is important for us to inquire, whether any *power* was delegated to the prophet by the voice of God. His *duty* was clear and simple, but had he any *power*, any licence given to him in the execution of his

office, for the injury or the advantage of the people to whom he was sent? Could the prophet, or could he by his own authority promote their salvation? Were they in any sense dependent upon him? Was his opinion, or was his will in any sense the rule or the guide, of the divine procedure? Could he commit, or could he control the will of God? If so, Nineveh was in a sad plight! The prophet, if he could, evidently would have doomed Nineveh, that great city, to an awful destruction. But God overruled him. Now this is a view of the relation subsisting between the servant of God, and the people of God, that is of immense importance to us in the present day. And if there be any truth or any force in the representation I have now given of the office and the appointment of Jonah, we are of necessity brought to this conclusion, that *men are in no sense at the mercy of their ministers*. The salvation of the soul depends not in any sense on the authority of the minister. The only mischief that the minister can perpetrate upon mankind is to *mislead* and to *delude*. But God has put into the hands of the people at large, the means of *testing* the teaching of their ministers, and no man *need* be deceived about religion, the revelation God has given to us from heaven in the Scriptures is full, is simple; so simple that a child may read it; the most ignorant may understand it; and it is not merely their privilege but their duty to do so. The apostle Paul says that "the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched diligently to see whether these things were so," that is the things that were taught them by the Apostles and others. And they tested everything that was taught them by the *Word of God*; if it agreed with it, they received it; if they are adverse to it, they rejected it. Ministers are but the finger posts to point the people to Christ; at the very best, they are but guides. And they are of value as guides only, so far as their knowledge of Emanuel's land is comprehensive and complete; and in this sense the minister becomes an improved guide, just as his own heart, and his own understanding is improved. His efficiency is not the result of his office, or of his ordination, or of his orders, but of his knowledge and piety. He is more skilful as he advances in knowledge, than at the outset of his career. His improvement must be secured by the same means as the improvement of any other profession. The Lawyer and the Physician attain to eminence and skill, by study, not by any legal arrangement. And the value of the minister is not in the validity of his orders, but in the clearness of his views, and the skill of his ministry, and the piety of his character.

The minister must cultivate his own heart, enrich his own mind, and he becomes of value to the people only in proportion as he becomes better acquainted with the character of God, and the way of salvation, as it is set forth in the Word of life.

But then another remark forces itself upon us, as from the contemplation of this subject. The dealings of God are not always to the mind of the minister. "My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And this is as true, in relation to the views that are entertained of the way of life, in those that assume the office of the minister, as in relation to any other part of the community. We often find that men who hold this sacred office, become exceedingly angry if all men will not wear their prescribed livery, and will not go to heaven in their way. How many are there that stand at the door of the house when the church is coming together to break bread, and ask all manner of questions, questions not prompted by the Word or the authority of God? And if you are not of *their community*, you may not sit down at *their table*. Prove you are a Christian minister; let it be set forth before God's people, that God is blessing your ministry by enabling you so to exhibit Christ and him crucified, that multitudes are brought to love God and to forsake their sin, but if you will not wear the badge of sectarianism, if you will not pronounce their Shibbo-

leth, there is no admission for you into their church upon earth ; and as far as we may judge from their conduct, would keep you out of the church in heaven ! But can they ? Could Jonah lift up his voice and command that the destroying angel should come in spite of God, and that he should go through that vast people, and destroy men, women, and children, and cattle, and every thing that had life and breath in that place ? He had it in his *heart*, but he had it not in his *power*. God will not leave any soul to the mercy of any man, call him by what name you please. Jonah was affronted because Nineveh was not destroyed ; but Nineveh was spared, in spite of him. Had *he* the keys of the kingdom of heaven in his hands ? If he had, he would have locked the gate of heaven against every living soul ! But there are some who tell us they have the keys—they can bind, and none can loose—they can loose, and none can bind ; but if it were not in the power of the prophet—a prophet divinely appointed—a prophet who had received his commission from God himself—will you be persuaded that any mortal man, a man making not even the pretensions to piety, not even a good man, for they tell you his *goodness* has nothing to do with his *office*, it is enough that he is an authorised preacher, and if such, he holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, can shut and open at his pleasure, will you believe it ? And then, 2nd, the petulance of the believer has been a great scandal to religion, a great hindrance. Oh, unbeliever, it is this profession to which I have referred—it is the spirit such as manifested by Jonah, when God offers a full, free salvation to a dying world ; and that causes petulant ministers to be irritable and angry because salvation is offered too freely, too largely ; who detest the word "*whosoever*," and would have the word "*all*" blotted out of the book of Revelation at once and for ever. I say, the manifestation of this spirit has made the infidel sneer, and hardened the heart of the worldly unbeliever.

And then we are led also to remark, in the third place, that the pardon of the guilty will bear a perfect vindication in the eye of the universe as did the pardon of Nineveh. When God pardons it is not of caprice, it is of equity as well as of sovereignty. God justified his procedure to Jonah ; God put Jonah to shame by the parable of the gourd. "What ! were you thankful for the gourd, and mourned, and was exceeding angry because the gourd withered and died—and will you be offended because I have saved the thousands and hundreds of thousands of Nineveh ?" And without giving the application to his argument he left Jonah to think over it. And when God shall come at the last great day in the person of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, all the ends of the earth shall be gathered together, "the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left," when the righteous shall receive his blessed welcome, "Come ye blessed," and when he shall say to the wicked, "Depart ye cursed ;" then God will be able to vindicate himself before every intelligent being in reference to the equity, the justice of the salvation of the penitent, and the eternal condemnation of the wicked.

Dear friends, I have thus endeavoured to the best of my power to fulfil the duty—the delightful duty—which I have imposed upon myself. I have called your attention to "the mission and the flight of Jonah," to the "punishment and the rescue of Jonah," to "his preaching, and its effects upon the people," and to-night I have placed in contrast before you "the petulance of the prophet and the mercy of God ;" and what shall be the issue ? Every one of us, without a single exception, the young, the old, the believer, the unbeliever—every one that lives must die, and dying, we must face the Eternal. We shall have to give an account before God of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be bad ; we shall have to answer for the advantages we have had conferred upon us from Sabbath to Sabbath ; I shall have to give an account of my preaching before God ; you will have to give an account of your hearing—and what shall be the issue ? salvation or ruin—which shall it be ?

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE SUFFERINGS OF TIME, NOT WORTHY OF COMPARISON
WITH THE GLORIES OF ETERNITY.

A Funeral Sermon

BY THE REV. F. A. COX, D.D., LL.D.

DELIVERED

AT MARE STREET CHAPEL, HACKNEY, ON SUNDAY MORNING,
FEBRUARY 1, 1852.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—ROMANS viii. 18.

THE preceding context shews us clearly that this language is appropriate only to believers in Jesus, of whom it is said, “There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” To them “affliction which is but for a moment, *worketh out* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Not however, that future happiness is to be regarded as a kind of recompense for present suffering—present suffering being sufficient to satisfy the justice of God, and to procure his ultimate favour, as some absurdly imagine; but in the way of instrumental operation; calling into rigorous exercise, the spiritual principles of the Christian, and thus sanctifying and preparing the mind for that state of unafflicted felicity which the future state will develope.

We must bear in mind that the sufferings of the primitive Christians were of an extraordinary character. That was indeed *tribulation* and *great tribulation*, out of which they came to their ultimate glory. But if the Apostle, and with him the primitive Christians generally in that season of peculiar trial could say, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed,”—how much more may we say so whose sufferings in general are so inferior to their’s. What a glory that must be which will surpass, not only every particular affliction incident to our nature here, but all the sufferings endured in this world, even those of an extraordinary kind, and attended with the greatest aggravations! Nothing, indeed, can adequately support the mind under these afflictions, but the thought of the great hereafter. “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” But Jesus has risen from the dead to secure the glory in question; and our hope penetrates beyond the horizon of time, and realises the felicities of
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that future, where all that constitutes real blessedness, and that for ever, will belong to the faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Now it is worthy of observation that the text is *the language of experience*: and of one of whom we may say that in a remarkable sense he actually experienced both the conditions to which he referred, even in this present state. He knew what tribulation meant: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." The Apostle had also an experience of the *future* world, for the invisible world was in a sense brought down to him; or rather, he was permitted in a manner peculiar to himself, to see that heavenly glory. He says, "I knew a man about fourteen years ago—[referring to himself,]—(whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knowest;) such an one was caught up into the third heavens. And I knew such a man—how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter: of such an one will I glory." He knew by experience the tribulations of this world, and he had a glimpse, and but a glimpse it must have been, even though in vision, though still a reality as to the basis and purpose of it—yet after all only a glimpse of the glory that is to follow. Yet even that glimpse of the celestial glory enabled him to "reckon," to calculate, to feel an assurance after the most deliberate thought that "the sufferings of this present state are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

Now, my brethren, observe just for a moment another point. We feel the effect of sufferings less, in proportion to our distance from them. If the language of the Apostle on this occasion, arose only from reflecting upon sufferings which he endured some twenty or thirty years before, we see plainly that the comparison between the sufferings then experienced, and the glory which he more recently beheld, would be likely to induce him to estimate those sufferings less, and that glory as greater—the near object producing a deeper impression than the more remote one, which besides, had passed away. When, however, he wrote these words, he was *in the very midst* of the sufferings; they were all affecting him at the time; he was enveloped as we may say by the fires of tribulation. And yet, while in the very midst of these trials, looking only at the heavenly state as at a distance, and only imperfectly brought near to him in vision, or by a temporary mental abstraction—even under these circumstances he exclaims, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present state," painful, oppressive, overwhelming as I at this moment feel them, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Perhaps, my dear hearers, if we reflect a little on our own experience, we shall ascertain this fact: that we are apt to be unduly depressed by the afflictions

tions of this present state, in consequence of *the false standard by which we estimate them*. We commonly take very different views from those which the Apostle entertained. For instance : sometimes we compare our *sufferings* with the *pleasures* of this present state, which might be enjoyed, or it may be which we have enjoyed in past times ; and this has a tendency to diminish the impression of this sentiment. We compare our afflicted state with our past prosperous condition ; with days of health and of comfort, and happy association. Now we see the cloud has come over us ; we are in deep sorrow, and painfully realise the contrast between our present circumstances of ill health, disappointment or loss, vexations and trials of various kinds, with that calm, even flow of sunny existence which we experienced at a former period ; so that taking past life and past enjoyment, as the standard, we form a very different estimate of the sufferings we now experience, from that which the apostle formed when he took a different standard of comparison in this passage.

Sometimes, again, we compare the sufferings of this present state, with what seems to be *the lighter sufferings of others*. And this idea renders our own suffering more oppressive and more painful. We think, perhaps, of the many that are happy around, who are at least exempt from the trials with which we are exercised, and which we are so apt to call *peculiar*, as though no one else ever suffered equally or similarly. We look at multitudes, and take as the standard of comparison with respect to ourselves their lighter afflictions ; and therefore form on this subject our incorrect judgment and cherish unsuitable feelings.

And then sometimes we consider our sufferings in relation to the proportion they have to the length of our lives ; and the proportion may be very large, so that we are ready to think that they *are* worthy of being compared with the space of comfort and enjoyment ; a thought very much calculated to produce discontent with the arrangements of providence. "We have been afflicted," says the querulous spirit, "twenty, thirty, forty years ;" which is an immense proportion of human life ; and the idea is generated that the case is *hard* ; as though God had "forgotten to be gracious," and as though the divine Saviour had dismissed his sympathies. Regarding chiefly the extensive period which has been filled with suffering, as compared with the length of life, which is but short, after all, we erect our own standard again, and in so doing, we feel our afflictions more pressing and grievous ; and think them worthy of being highly estimated, and almost justifying irritation, repining, and despondency.

Let us now take a lesson from the apostle. Let us step aside for a season from this dark and confused world, and from these painful circumstances, and just look at something else as the standard—something higher, nobler, infinitely better ; something that will cause us to feel our trials less, and even altogether insignificant, whatever they may be. The blaze of the heavenly glory will surely seem to extinguish "the sufferings of this present state," and even annihilate the fear of death. Mark that expression "*in us*"—not only *to us*, but "*in us*." Heaven, my brethren, will not only be a *revelation*, it will be an *experience*—that is, its glory. We shall not only *see* that which "eye hath not

seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive," but feel and be absorbed in it. Heaven will come unto the soul, transforming, elevating, and perfecting all its faculties, and imparting a new order of moral perceptions, and exciting a new degree of spiritual activities. It will be "revealed in us." There will not only be a heaven around consisting of all the forms, and variety of blessedness exhibited in the transcendent glory of heavenly objects, but the heaven will be essentially and pre-eminently *within* us. Sanctity—resemblance to God, the entire purification of the nature, one so corrupt and vile, an elevation above all that is mean, impure, imperfect, debasing, and deathful—yes ! it will be "revealed in us" in all its transforming, transcendent, and immortal influence.

Two questions are suggested in further considering this apostolic declaration—

I. *In what respects are present sufferings so insignificant as not to be worthy of a comparison with future glory ?*

1st. Certainly not in the point of *intensity*. Whatever they may be—and take, if you will, the greatest sufferings that any one has endured ; or look even at the collective tribulations of the primitive times—they admit of no comparison with the anticipated glory. Mere general afflictions are not to be named, though they may be what in the present world are termed severe ; but the apostle refers, as I have intimated, to their greatest sufferings in that persecuting age when bonds, imprisonments, and death, awaited them every day ; but the very agonies of martyrdom he did not deem worthy of being brought into comparison with the ineffable joys of heaven.

This is a delightful idea of that blissful futurity to which the saints are destined when the reunited body will be rendered capable of such a transcendent happiness, that it will immeasurably surpass in degree the bitterest pangs that can be suffered here below. What, then—O ! what must be the degree of that glory which surpasses the calamities of life, the pains of death, and the agonies of a cruel martyrdom ; and not only surpasses, but so surpasses them, that the one shall not admit of comparison with the other !

2. The sufferings of this state of being are not worthy of being regarded, in comparison with the glory to be revealed in us in point of *duration*. Nothing temporal can compare with what is eternal. No suffering here can be long. The longest life itself is but short ; besides that in the most afflicted life there are interminglings of alleviation. Though it were otherwise, this representation would perfectly apply ; much more when the severest sufferings have their mitigations. But let this life be whatever it may in length or degree of pain, it cannot be worthy of comparison with that which is absolutely eternal, as well as inconceivably glorious. Our highest conceptions of the heavenly glory must be low after all, because we can scarcely conceive of eternal duration at all. We have no experience of an absolutely continuous, uninterrupted, and unceasing sorrow or joy. Our power of making the comparison, therefore, in fact, ceases at a point in which our conceptions must necessarily be infinitely short of the future reality ; and therefore we almost obtain the requisite data for instituting the comparison or forming the notion of any degree of proportion. When, therefore, we contemplate that which is eternal, or attempt to

realise an everduring blessedness, and think of it as perfect in degree so as to absorb completely all the passions of the soul, without any intermixture of evil, or interruption of enjoyments, can the sufferings of a brief life be comparable with such a glory? Well might the apostle say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present state are not worthy of comparison with the future." "I reckon"—this is my conclusion; I have calculated this—I weighed the matter thoroughly and often; there is no proportion between the two; I see that this is only a temporal state, and after all, its sufferings are insignificant, and not to be compared with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory that is presented to my view in the promises of my God, and through the triumphs of my Saviour; a blessed eternity in view, and time, with all that belongs to it, vanishes into nothingness.

II. *On what considerations was this conclusion of the apostle founded?* What induced so triumphant a declaration?—for there is triumph in the very language. We might fancy that as his pen inscribed these words, his countenance glowed with raptures, and his eyes sparkled with delight, while he was enabled, under the influence of inspiration, to record such a sentiment as this, which he knew too would be a thought cheering to believers in all future ages, as it again and again revolved in the mind, amidst the mass of calamities of mortal existence. He knew that this assurance would hereafter animate many a suffering, and many a dying Christian.

On what, then, was this calculation founded?

1. On the sense which he entertained, and which we are permitted to entertain of the love of God in Christ Jesus. It is manifestly such to believers in this present world, that supported by the promises they may calculate upon future glory. Infinite love must be disposed to impart an immeasurable happiness—a happiness limited only by the capacities of a sanctified soul; every obstacle to the communication of it being removed the full tide of bliss will flow in. Many obstacles in ourselves exist in this mortal state, preventing the influx of a perfect happiness, which being removed, God will delight in the unceasing bestowment of happiness; his love will then have free course. There cannot be a withholding of good when there is no reason to withhold it. There is a withholding of it in the present state because reason enough exists in our own sinfulness and imperfection, but there can be no restriction to the communication when there is none to the reception. How can we conceive that infinite love should stop short of imparting a blessing to sanctified and immortal souls? What a glorious thought is this! God *can* impart a degree of happiness to his purified ones beyond even all our present conceptions, and his love will necessitate him to do it. As he cannot be willing that any should perish, so he cannot be willing that any should lose a degree of happiness of which they are capable, and for which they are prepared, when there is no moral reason; that is no obstacle as to sin and unbelief to prevent the bestowment. In his presence there will therefore be a "fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore."

2. This anticipation of blessedness is confirmed and illustrated by the descriptions given in the Bible of the heavenly state. These descriptions shew

that there can be no comparison between the sufferings of this present state and the glory which shall be revealed in the future. It is represented as "nearness to God, and likeness to him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Blessed association! we shall be "as the angels." Purity, with joy, and song, and jubilee, belong to that world; freedom from all cares, and enjoyments of all good are contained in the idea "We shall hunger no more, we shall weep no more." This is the weeping world; now the tear falls, but "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes;" there will be no more sin, the cause of suffering, and no more death. The New Testament suggests the idea of *mansions*—"In my Father's house are many mansions," one for every believer, the poorest, the humblest. "I go to prepare a place for you." Then we are assured of a *crown*. "Be thou faithful unto death," says our Redeemer, "and I will give you a crown of life"—life adorned with all possible dignity and distinction. *Life*, moreover, in its highest possible state and degree, having *eternity* stamped upon it. "I give unto them *ETERNAL* life, and they shall never perish." How mean and contemptible does every thing by which we are encompassed below appear in comparison to being "*ever* with the Lord," which must imply inconceivable, immeasurable, immortal felicity. The sufferings of this present state, then, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. And what must be the bliss of that moment when the disembodied spirit stands upon the heavenly plain, and looking round upon the amplitude of blessedness and glory by which it will be encompassed on every side, feels itself for the first moment a being immortal, undying, and, to concentrate all happy thoughts in one, NEAR GOD!

3. Our anticipation of the incomparable glory is founded on the *powers of the human soul* surpassing in capacity for enjoyment what the body can endure in suffering.

The powers both of enjoyment and suffering in the present state seems to depend essentially on the capacities of corporeal organisation. There is a singular sympathy between the body and the soul as it respects bodily suffering, which loses its power at a certain point, when insensibility ensues. When disconnected from the mortal body we can conceive the soul to be capable of a wonderful accession of suffering or enjoyment. The body will then become a spiritual body. What the body may suffer here, then, is not likely to be comparable with what both soul and body may enjoy in the realms of bliss hereafter; consequently "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

III. *To what especial uses may these thoughts be applied?*

1. It should *increase our love to God* for providing so blessed an abode for his saints, and fill us with adoring gratitude that we, in distinction from others, have received and have learned to appreciate the character of our present sufferings in relation to our future destiny, and the true glory of that destiny. How many are there in the world who are to this hour entirely ignorant of the gospel; and how many who are continually hearing it feel no interest in it, and consequently share none of its blessings! And surely there cannot be a more melancholy condition than that of being a constant hearer of the gospel and as constantly unconverted by it. A person perpetually hearing of the felicity of the life to come, and the ground of hope for the possession of it, as set before us in the gospel, yet still unimpressed, unaffected by a sense of sin, untouched by the love of Christ, perceiving nothing of the glories of the future, absorbed in the pleasures, or engrossed in a repining selfishness with the sufferings of the present, having no sympathy of mind with the revelations of truth and promises of the gospel, demands at once the bitterest tears of a pious commiseration, and the most pungent and spirit-stirring appeals of ministerial fidelity.

Salvation includes not only the promise of this life but of that which is to

come—access, acceptance, and ultimate union with God through the grace and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. How infinitely are we indebted, then, my brethren, to our pardoning God for the prospect of heaven—we who have deserved perdition, how ought we to cherish love to him and prove the strength of it by devotedness to his service. We never can repay, we never can even adequately appreciate this grace—it is immeasurable—it is divine!

2. These thoughts of the glory of the world to come, which reduces the sufferings of this state of being to comparative nothingness, should *assuage our earth-born anxieties and griefs*. Why are we so overwhelmed with afflictions, seeing their short duration and existence? Soon all the Christian's sorrows will melt away into infinite joy. Heaven is real, and heaven is near! Why then should we allow ourselves to be so disturbed with things light and transient, with afflictions which are but for a moment? Amidst the turbulence and confusion of this mortal state, let us look upward, and press onward "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Soon "all our sorrows will be left below, and earth exchanged for heaven." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away."

It methinks that if the emotions of those blessed immortals who have passed through the tribulation of time, to a glorious eternity, could be conveyed to us in the intelligible expressions of a human language, or if they could come down to us and convey to our unaccustomed perceptions a vivid sense of their retrospective meditations, the meaning of the impression, if not actually clothed in verbal forms, would be,—“The glory that is to come is so great, that it appears inconceivable to our minds that you should be so troubled with the passing scenes and perplexities of mortal life. Why should you so attach yourselves to the things of time, and why should you magnify your temporary tribulations? We are waiting your arrival, and long to see you anticipate our joys, inherit our glory, sympathize with our feelings, and join our songs, which will for ever obliterate from thought, except in reflective triumph, the anxieties and trials of the insignificant past? You are always, alas! prone to imagine them worthy of consideration; they are filling your vision; affecting your senses, almost absorbing your minds, while, after all, they are nothing, utterly unworthy of comparison, with the glory which shall be revealed.”

3. The joyous suggestion of the text should be improved to impel your afflictions habitually towards “things that are above.” The more we look at the coming glory, the less shall we be effected by the passing evils of life. What appears to you as viewed apart, an occasion of great sorrow, will speedily fade into nothingness, when brought into comparison with eternal realities. When, my brethren, we stand at the grave of a believer who has died like our departed friend, to whom I would now more distinctly refer, we become for the moment, victims of an opposite class of feelings, which seem struggling for the mastery. We weep, and yet we rejoice. We look at what has happened, we see dissolution, decay, and sepulchral darkness, and the tear begins to start; we look upward, and it is wiped away, for we realize the joy,—“A joy unspeakable and full of glory,”—that is theirs, and which faith assures us shall be ours.

Some facts demand to be stated, with regard immediately to our departed friend, who has been associated with us for very many years, and has so greatly adorned her religious profession. Often has she been called to the death-bed, in her own family, but the scene of mourning has been cheered by the display of a victorious piety; as her children successively preceded her on the great journey; but even amidst her sorrows, she has displayed a power of religion, by which she was enabled to comfort, and instruct others. “It was a great

privilege," writes a friend, "to enjoy intercourse with her. Her conversation was pre-eminently in heaven, while her efforts were unceasing, to promote the spiritual interests of all who came within the sphere of her influence. She eminently cared for the souls of others, and by displaying an enlightened judgment, she commended the subjects of religion, to those who visited her, with much wisdom and affection. And many, yes, many shall assuredly never forget her earnest and powerful attempts to persuade them to embrace Christ and his salvation. She was pre-eminent in her close intimacy and communion with God, and she displayed this in all her conversation with the people of God. Those who visited her, were invariably constrained ere they left her, to unite with her in the exercise of prayer. Cheerfulness, peace, and resignation were always most conspicuous; and her bright and expressive countenance, was but the index to the perfection of praise, and gratitude abounding within. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name,' was her constant theme. In the midst of the most afflicting and painful circumstances, that was her constant theme. Her feelings and expressions were frequently ecstatic, when anticipating the bliss of the future and heavenly state, and reunion with many beloved ones, who had all died in the faith, and amidst the sufferings of her last days, to the closing scene, she exhibited the peaceful influences of that good hope through Christ, in the soul of the Christian, which had long been her treasure and joy. 'Bless the Lord, oh my soul,' were the last words she was heard to articulate, when she soon passed into the beatific vision."

Will you not, my dear hearers, become followers of them who "through faith and patience inherit the promises?" Whither are you going? Are you pursuing the same course with our departed friend? Are you followers of Christ? Are you "serving him in your day and generation?" Have you repented of sin? Do you believe in Christ? I ask not if you have ecstatic joys, but if you have calm, solid and substantial faith in Christ? This is the "victory that overcometh the world." It is *our faith*, nothing else will triumph over it. In a state of impenitence and unbelief, pursue whatever course you may, in expectation of happiness, you will never find it. The hope without an interest in Christ is a shadow, a dream, a vanity. Here alone, in the principles of the everlasting gospel, is firm footing, here in the faith of Christ is solid peace and holy triumph, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE DANGER OF STANDING STILL, AND THE DUTY OF
PROGRESS.

A Sermon

BY THE REV. WALTER SMITH, M.A.

DELIVERED

AT CHADWELL STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MYDDLETON SQUARE,
ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1852.

"Therefore, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment, and this will we do, if God permit."—HEBREWS vi. 1—3.

THE day springs not all of a sudden from the dark, revealing in a moment the whole blaze and fervor of noon, but first breaking with a faint glimmer, that just streaks the horizon, and gradually edging the clouds with a fringe of gold, the sun "cometh like a bridegroom from his chamber," and the path of the light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and so confident is our expectation to see the uniform recurrence of this progressive illumination, that if, at any time, he were to pause amidst the grey mists of the morning, and keep hovering about the horizon, instead of swelling up to the zenith, it is certain we should all be stricken with panic, and look for nothing but disaster from so mysterious an event. The seed, scattered on the fruitful earth, does not leap all at once into the graceful maturity of ripe vegetation; but shooting up the soft and milky bud among the dews, by slow and unseen degrees, the germ expands into the stalk or stem, and the branch sprouts, and the leaf unfolds, and the blossom puts forth its delicate petals, till at last the yielding branch droops with its grateful burden to the earth; but if, instead of this "going on to perfection," it were to stop short at the first step, and continue to be only a green, soft, pulpy bud, glued up in its casket, and just peeping above the mould, then, no matter how sound and healthy it might be to look at, we should soon grow impatient of this delay, and sweep it out of sight, as merely cumbering the ground. The child does not come into the world with the "strength robust of manhood's vigorous frame" and capacious intelligence, but the soft and pliant limbs of infancy are gradually knit into the elastic and bounding activity of youth, and the dim unconscious mind slowly dawns to the knowledge of its powers, and so all his life long he continues growing either in

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body or brain, till "the ripe sheaf" at last is gathered into the garner; nor is there any more painful and humiliating spectacle than a state of protracted childhood, and feebleness, and incapacity, when we might have expected the hardihood and energy of a manly understanding. This law of continued progression, then, up at least to a certain point of excellence or attainment, is one so familiar to us all, that if at any point our expectation were balked—if the morning did not expand into the day, if the bud did not ripen into the plant, if the child did not grow to the man—no matter how admirably they might continue to perform the functions of their immature and embryo state, we should be forced to conclude that their object had been utterly frustrated, because they never were able to reach the goal of their natural perfection.

Now, in the very same way, first, in opposition to those who imagine that they can leap at one bound from a state of guilt and pollution into one where there is not only no condemnation, but no sin or stain to defile them; and equally in opposition to those who are always lingering among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and never going beyond its fundamental and rudimentary conceptions; we say to both of these parties, the life of faith is a life of progress, a growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. True it is that by one act of divine grace, the soul is brought from death unto life, as Lazarus came from the tomb at the bidding of him who is Lord of death and the grave; but it is also true that the old habits of sin, the wrappings and bandages with which it is girt about, have to be gradually unloosed and shaken off by the patient efforts of the spirit to attain a more perfect liberty and life. True it is, that the darkness fleeth away so soon as Christ anoints the eyeballs of the blind; but it is also true, that, like him who for a season "beheld men as it were trees walking," so our spiritual vision must be gradually trained to the light and the exercise of its powers, ere it can rightly discern the things which belong to its everlasting peace. True it is, in short, that we are justified by one act of faith in the Lord, but it is no less true that our sanctification is the product of a patient and laborious effort, diffusing grace throughout the whole man, as the leaven is spread through the lump. "The path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and the growth of vital godliness is like the corn of seed, quickened indeed, by one act of divine power, but ripening slowly under the dews of grace and the sunshine of righteousness; and the life of those who are born again of the Spirit is always expanding and aspiring towards "the measure of the stature of the perfect man in Christ." Now, this progress towards perfection, which it is the duty and destiny of every believer to accomplish, must needs be carried on by a growing and conscious exercise of faith in the great realities of the gospel mystery; and the apostle, in his anxiety to see the development of a masculine and vigorous Christianity, takes occasion here to chide the Hebrews, because they continued "babes" when they should have been men, and could only be fed with "milk," when they should have been "nourishing their souls with the strong meat which belongeth to those who are of full age, and who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." Wherefore, he goes on to say, "leaving the principles of the

doctrine of Christ," leaving the mere rudiments of the oracles of God, let us hasten on to perfection ; it is not meet to be always babes and sucklings, lisping and stammering, when the truth should be familiar to our tongues ; it is not meet to be coasting along the shore amid the shallows and the breakers, when there is sea-room and calm amid the deep waters beyond ; it is not meet to be always laying the foundations, instead of rearing upon them that goodly structure of faith, that " holy temple of the Lord, which is truly an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Such then, in general, is the object which the apostle has in view ; and now he proceeds to specify the particular evils of which he had to complain. These you will see, proceed in pairs, according to that particular aspect of the church to which they stand immediately related ; and their importance, in that sense, is fully admitted by the fact that they are all described as *foundations*. In our common way of viewing these things, repentance and faith, baptism and ordination, resurrection and judgment, would hardly have been classed together as fundamental, or first principles of the oracles of God : nay, there are multitudes who will not scruple to say that some of them are not essential, nor indeed of any practical importance whatsoever. Now we do not mean to assert that they are all " first principles" in the same sense as bearing upon the question of salvation ; neither do we feel at liberty to separate and set at nought what God has joined into one bundle ; and therefore it will be necessary at this point to enquire how it is that the six doctrines are set down in our text as foundation-stones in Zion.

There is no great difficulty adhering to the first class of these elementary principles : repentance from dead works and faith toward God are plainly the foundations of the *real spiritual* church of Christ. When we find it written on the one hand, " By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," and on the other, " Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"—at one time that " our very repentance needeth to be repented of," and at another that " without faith we cannot please God," and again " not of works lest any man should boast," but " by grace are ye saved through faith." These and a multitude of similar passages scattered up and down the Scriptures of truth, tell us plainly enough that it will not do to build on any comparative or imaginary excellence of our own, that there must be a hearty repentance from all sin, (and all that we do is tainted with sin,) that we must, in short, dig away all that loose earth and shifting sand, on which the unrenewed and unenlightened build the frail structure of their hopes, and rest by faith on the sure foundation, the tried stone, the rock of ages, on which the saints are built up as polished shafts and pillars in the living temple of the Lord. Until the law has come, then, and wrought convictions of sin—until conviction has come, and wrought contrition of heart—and until the tears of a sanctified repentance have purged, as it were, the eye of faith to discern the things that are God's—there is no vital religion, for Christ is not in us a sure hope of glory. But while the real and spiritual church of the Lord rests on this foundation of " repentance from dead works and faith towards God," it is not to be forgotten that this seed and germ of immortal life is held in a case of ruder and perishable matter—that this gem is

locked in a casket—that this pearl is kept in a shell—that this treasure is hid in an earthen vessel—that the spiritual church lies in the heart of a visible body, precious indeed in the eye of God, as maintaining the functions and manifesting the life of those who are chosen and beloved, but altogether different in its organization from that glorious church which he purchased with his own blood, and clothes with the beauty of holiness. When the apostle, then, speaks in our text of the doctrine of “baptisms and ordination,” as first principles or foundations, we do not understand that such principles lie at the root of vital godliness, neither is it possible to believe that such language could be applied to them, if they were of no moment whatever; and therefore, shrinking equally from that unspiritual ecclesiasticism, which has gone far to render Christ’s cross of none effect, and from that undiscerning spiritualism, which has gone far on the other side, to nullify the visible church and ordinance of God, we assert that there is no other possible way of reconciling our text with other portions of God’s word, except this, that those doctrines of baptism and ordination are the foundation of that great institute which is the main instrument in diffusing the riches of grace among the children of men. We do not mean to say that there is no Christianity where these are wanting—that there have been none of the faithful except among those who have been duly baptised—or that God’s truth cannot be proclaimed, except by those who have received the apostolic ordination by “the laying on of hands of the presbytery,” but unquestionably we do mean to say, that without these there is no *visible church*; and although the soul, apart from the body, may live in the conscious enjoyment and exercise of its manifold powers, still its ordinary existence and perfect capacities are only to be seen in their full display and development, when acting through the members of the flesh; and, in like manner, although the spiritual may exist independent of the visible church, yet this is not its natural sphere of action; nor have we any right to expect the healthful and vigorous manifestation of its powers, if we venture to disregard what is the manifest ordinance of God for its weal. We conclude, therefore, that these doctrines of baptism and ordination are classed among the foundations, because, while the church spiritual is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,” the church visible is grounded on those symbols and sacraments which are indeed a coinage from the same mint, but not of themselves the precious fine gold, but do only represent and pledge its treasures to the faithful. Still, however, there remains another aspect in which our Zion may be viewed. *Now* the jewel is comparatively hidden, but some day yet it will blaze on the crown of the Highest—now the spouse is wandering about the streets of the city, crying—“Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?”—but some day yet “she shall be brought into the chamber of the King, in glorious beauty, like dew from the womb of the morning.” Now the church is militant, fighting a sore battle with enemies without and traitors within—but some day yet it shall be triumphant, crowned with palm leaves, and shouting the new song of the Lamb. Of this we have a sure faith; but ere this hope can be accomplished, it is plain there must be a resurrection of the dead, “when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal

shall put on immortality," and a day of searching and separation, of doom and destiny, of eternal and irreversible judgment, when "that which is filthy shall be filthy still, and that which is holy shall be holy for ever." Thus, then, corresponding with this threefold aspect of our Zion, we obtain a similar variety of fundamental or first principles: the *spiritual* church militant resting on repentance from dead works and faith towards God; the *visible* church militant being grounded on baptism and laying on of hands; and the *glorious* church triumphant, necessarily pre-supposing the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment of all.

Such then, we apprehend, is the view which the apostle would have us to take of these doctrines; and we need hardly add that if this exposition be true, there is none of them to be lightly treated as of small importance to the faith. They do not, indeed, all stand on the same level, or bear with them the same tremendous consequences; but, since they are all classed among "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," to disregard even the least of them, must needs be a perilous and foolhardy procedure. Still, however, they constitute only the elements, the rudiments, the under ground foundations of the gospel, and what the apostle charges against the Hebrews is that by the continual use of this milk, which was meant for babes, they had "become unskilful in the word of righteousness;" and when they ought to have become teachers, had need themselves to be taught. They had obtained, in the knowledge of these truths, a glimpse into the excellent glory, but content with mere vague and general impressions, or satisfied with the tangible foundations of the ecclesiastical edifice, they were practically slighting the living oracles of God, by refusing to press forward in the appointed way, "towards the prize of the mark of their high calling in Christ." Now, we put it to you, whether there be not a similar indolence of soul, a similar protracted and unhappy childhood, manifested by much of the professing christianity of our age? To begin at home, where we have the best means of knowing what is amiss, is there not a tendency among us to be always laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God? Is there not a manifest unwillingness to go beyond that charmed circle into the loftier regions of the gospel of grace? Is there not a great unwillingness to hear any other doctrine, and an equal willingness to set down the preacher as dealing with abstract and unprofitable doctrine, when the truth of the matter is, that your own minds have been lying with a leaden weight of reluctance chained to one point and refusing to move onward with the swelling tide of revelation? True, those doctrines constitute the foundations of the spiritual church, but are we always, as it were, to be working under ground? Are we never to rise above the surface? Is this stately fabric of the truth never to attain its full amplitude and proportions in the Christianity of our time? Is it not our manifest duty to leave these first principles, and go on towards a perfect knowledge of the living oracles of God? And if it be a serious evil to be lingering always even at this point, whereon the spiritual temple leans all its superincumbent weight, and from which it receives its own eternal stability, how much more dangerous it must be to take for the staple of our instructions and meditations those doctrines of baptism

and ordination, which are only the foundations of that ecclesiastical edifice, whose most imposing and majestic structure, in a few short years, must crumble into dust, and disappear like the ark from the very face of creation? And yet is it not a manifest feature of the times in which we live, that a certain class of men think themselves to be busy about true religion and the glory of God, when all their thoughts are going in the dull, unvarying round of mere sacramental formalities? Are there not many who are found thus labouring at the foundations of the outer wall, and whose foot is never planted in the holy of holies? Neither can we say much for that kind of instruction which deals only with the tremendous realities of the coming resurrection and judgment. The certain opening of the silent grave—the gathering of the scattered dust—the relaxing grasp of death's iron and terrible hand—the restoration of the faded forms of human life—the return of the spirit and breath to the nostrils—the appearance of the man at the bar of God's judgment!—All these are, doubtless, fitted to startle and solemnize the mind, so that it may pause to think in the midst of its headlong career; but neither the fear of them, nor the faith of them will save a soul from sin; and therefore while they have their place and usefulness among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, we would dissuade you from always laying this foundation, we would urge you to go on to perfection. There is no spiritual church without repentance and faith; there is no visible church without baptism and laying on of hands; there can be no future church without the resurrection and the judgment; each of these doctrines, then, in its own place, is of vast importance; let us, in evidence of our faith, yield a ready consent to their truth, and build up on that foundation the perfect structure of God's truth and God's work. What, then, are those more perfect things towards which it is our duty to be always pressing on? What are those objects of divine contemplation through which we may be thoroughly transformed in the image of our mind, and made conformable to the likeness of Him who was "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person?" Brethren, we do not know that a more complete and comprehensive reply could be given to this enquiry than just to reckon up the subject-matter of this epistle, wherein the apostle tells how He that was "the heir of all things was made a little lower than the angels;" how "it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering;" how it was "by the grace of God that he tasted death for every one, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver those who all their life-time were subject to bondage;" how, crowned with glory and honour, all things now are under his feet; how he is an "eternal High Priest, faithful in the things pertaining to God, and merciful towards man," "having been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin;" and how "both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified, are all one in Christ." There is "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;" there is "the one offering for sin, whereby God is just, and yet the justifier of them that believe in his name;" there is the oath of the Most High, and "anchor of our soul, sure and stedfast, entering within the veil;" there is the eternal Melchizedek, consecrated for ever to stand at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven; there is the mystic union of Christ with his living body, whereby we are made "partakers of the divine nature;" there is the wonderful testament of love, signed and sealed with the blood of the Holy One, whereby the faithful are made heirs of God and joint heirs with the Son of God.

And without further extending this summary of things, high, wonderful, and glorious, let me just remind you, that there is no less difference between the vague and unprofitable way in which the mind too often skims over these grand realities, and the effectual apprehension of their truth, than there is between the idle wonderment of ignorance, when looking up to the clear and star-lit

sky, and that of the intelligent philosopher, whose soul is engrossed by the wondrous story which is written there in characters of fire; and who, after poring for a life-time on that marvellous page of creation, finds at every other perusal some new revelation of might or mystery flashing on his mind, and filling him with a sense of the incomprehensible power and majesty of God-Head. Now, if this be so—as we are sure it is—if the galaxy of divine revelation be studded, as it were, with stars of ineffable beauty and grandeur, which yet the common run of Christians hardly pause to consider, is it any wonder that they are found seldom “holding fast their profession of faith without wavering?” Is it any wonder that a feeble and timorous spirit, and manifold perplexities, and frequent sinking of heart, are apparent in the midst of us? How can the mariner be otherwise than often in great doubt if he fail to take counsel of the stars? Would not the soldier lose half his courage in the day of battle, if he had not learnt to have confidence in his captain? And how can the Christian expect to attain the assurance of faith, or to experience the rich consolation of grace, if he be always lingering among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ—moistening the sick lip, as it were, with a feather, when his soul is needing a deep and full draught from the cup of the Lord’s loving-kindness?

We cannot disguise it from ourselves, that this continual shrinking from the “strong meat” of the Word—this protracted childhood with respect to the knowledge that “maketh wise unto salvation;” this perpetual laying again of the church’s foundations, has not only been the chief instrument in laying open the weak, but warm piety of many, to the contagion of that high church and Romish fever, under which the land has been for some time labouring, but that to the same cause is mainly to be attributed the comparative weakness of that which is truly Christian among us. It is the bidden and bounden duty of every believer, to know what is the will of God for his spiritual weal; it must needs, therefore, be a sin to neglect and overlook any one utterance from the living oracle of grace; in so far then, we have to charge those with guilt and blame, who are not pressing on to perfection in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.

But that is not all. We must remember that it is always by means of knowledge that any great advance is made or advantage obtained, even in this world: without the knowledge of his handicraft the labourer has nothing to bring into the market but the thews and sinews of an unremitting servitude; without knowledge of facts the strongest reason can only flounder about in the midst of uncertain and dim speculations; and, not to dwell longer on the necessity and advantage of such information, let us remember it is written. “By this knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” There is a peculiar and appropriate information for each particular object, which it is desirable to reach; and just as the knowledge of mathematics would be no qualification for a statesman, nor the knowledge of business for a philosopher, so there is no other information that will qualify the soul for its high and immortal destinies, except it be that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, to know the sinfulness of our own estate, to know the holiness of the Father of glory, to know the way, the truth, and the life, to know the well ordered covenant of grace. Hence the prayer of the Redeemer—“Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.” So that our growth in grace is proportioned to our growing knowledge of the Lord. We may, indeed, grow in knowledge, without growing in grace; for just as the increase of crystalization in the natural world is accomplished by means of successive layers adhering to the surface, increasing its dimensions, without affecting its shape, so may we lay on the surface of the understanding new stories of religious information, which yet in no respect change or modify our nature. At the same time, the growth of grace is to be accomplished *by means* of growing knowledge; for just as the plant shoots down its roots and tendrils into the moist earth, and thence gathers, by its natural instinct, for what is good, those juices which may assimilate with

its nature, and strengthen its woody fibre, and expand into the green leaf, and glow in the lovely petals of the flower, and lie in the heart of it a drop of sweetest honey—so it is the part of faith to absorb from the precious truths of God's Word, and assimilate with its very life, that which will give to it growth and vigour, and clothe it with the blossom, and foliage, and loveliness of moral excellence, and lie at its heart a drop of sweet and inexhaustible consolation.

Now, we contend, and we have often endeavoured to shew you, that those solemn and glorious truths of which we have been speaking, are fitted thus to strengthen and comfort the heart; and if you are not realizing this blessed power of the word, why is it, but just that ye are not seeking that heavenly manna, which would be as blood in your heart, as marrow in your bones, as beauty to your form, and cheerfulness and health to your whole being? Onward, then, towards perfection. Ye have been long enough babes and sucklings; it is your duty, your privilege, your strength to know the Lord thoroughly. Onward in the career of patient and prayerful study of the word, whereby, if the eyes of the body grow dim, the eyes of the mind shall be enlightened; onward and upward to those high points in the perfect doctrine of Jesus, which lie bathed in the "light inaccessible and full of glory;" onward, till engrossed with the contemplation of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, your souls, in the might and majesty of assured confidence in the Lord, shall be able to career over the waving billows of uncertainty, and ride straight to the mark of their high calling in God; onward, till imbued and informed, and pervaded by the spirit and power of the gospel, your whole body shall be filled with light from the clear and kindling vision of your faith; onward, till, seeing in heaven only God the reconciled, God the Mediator, and God the sanctifying Comforter, all the curse and calamities of life shall be carried away like the morning cloud, and the peace which passeth all understanding shall break and beam upon your souls, to set no more for ever. It is vain, indeed, to lay any other foundation than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus and him crucified, but having once rested your hope on the Rock of Ages, the best token of your faith is not to be always proving and trying the stability of this foundation, but to rear thereupon a mature and perfect structure of faith to the glory of God the Father. Yet think not that, by this counsel, we mean that the current of your thoughts should be turned away from Christ and towards unprofitable speculation. God forbid! But as in prosecuting the study of the great laws of nature, the observant and meditative thinker, rising as it were, on the buoyancy of an expansive principle, from things familiar and earthly, applies it to the measurement and comprehension of things heavenly, and thus by means of the same rule which solves the entanglements of some problem in every-day life, is enabled to wing his way through the stars unto the farthest verge of creation; in like manner we would fain see the Christianity of our time rising from the primary application of the gospel, in the sinner's justification to those high and heavenly relations, wherein it verily appears that God's mercy is over all his other works; for until it be seen that the perfect work of Jesus is not more suitable for man than it is glorious for the Father; until it be seen that his atonement not only solves the question of human redemption, but also maintains the untarnished majesty of heaven; until we can stand on that high ground of faith and see that the brightest halo of glory encircling the majesty of heaven, is that which beams from the glorious throng of those that were ransomed by the blood of the Lamb; till then it will be a vain expectation to hope ever to realize the full strength of the Christian's life, the firm certainty of the Christian's hope, the perfect loveliness of the Christian's character, or the peace and the rich consolation which abide in his heart for ever.

The Evangelical Pulpit.

REASON AND FAITH.

An Introductory Lecture

BY THE REV. J. C. GALLAWAY, A.M.

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"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."—1 PETER iii. 15.

MAKING ample allowance for the disadvantageous position which all men occupy in endeavouring to form an impartial view of the character of their own times, it can scarcely be questioned that the age in which we live is eventful, and, in some things, extraordinary. Taking the page of history in our hand, and comparing certain features of our day with those of other periods, it is undeniable that we sustain a character clearly distinguishable, and truly remarkable. I will not detain you, on the present occasion, by an attempt to give a description of all the peculiarities of these times! I call your attention to two. We evidently live at a period of very general and very strenuous intellectual activity. If any period in the past was fairly characterized as an age of reason, it is certain that the present one is more than any other entitled to that interesting and hopeful designation. The world has always had its thinking men; and with all deference to the most gifted of our contemporaries, we do not think that this age furnishes any specimens of intellectual greatness which exceed some of the wonders of the past. Still we have one intellectual characteristic which no other age has had to the same extent. I refer to its wide-spread and rapidly increasing intelligence. Knowledge is no longer the property of the few; it is diffused among the millions, and seems more than ever destined to become the possession of all. Improved methods of general education, cheap postage, travelling by steam, the electric telegraph, colonisation, and an ever-extending commerce, are peculiarities of our times, which not only indicate the expanding intelligence of the age, but are inevitably destined to accelerate the diffusion of knowledge in a degree which our fathers and ourselves have not known.

In virtue of these improvements, not only are the bulk of the people in this land becoming growingly intelligent, but other nations are evidently sharing, as largely, in the same great benefits. Man is coming into contact with man; nation is advancing the intelligence of nation; the entire world is growing in knowledge. One very natural result of this growth of intelligence—natural, considering man's inherent dislike to religion, and the mode in which he has too often been trained in religious things—is the entire abandonment of a re-

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ligious faith. Reason having been quickened by the events to which I have alluded, and reason finding that she has been wronged and insulted by the religious teaching and discipline which have been forced upon her, has claimed the full exercise of her own supposed independence and sufficiency, and has demanded a divorce from faith. It cannot be denied that free thinking (I use the term not in its fair and full sense, but in that very restricted one in which it is another name for absolute scepticism and atheism) is assuming a boldness of tone, receiving an intelligent advocacy, putting forth an aggressive effort, and exciting an influence on the general mind and on some of the public movements of our time, which meet with a parallel in no former period. The state of things in these respects is one which no intelligent and earnest christian can look upon with indifference. It is evidently the duty of every believer in Christ, and especially every public teacher of religion, to make himself well acquainted with this particular characteristic of the age, and to adapt, as far as is consistent and practicable, his mode of exhibiting the truth to such a phase of the public mind. Methods of presenting truth, and conducting religious service that might have been appropriate at one time are not so adapted now; and if the apostle Paul, without sacrificing any part of the gospel, still accommodated his mode of exhibiting truth to the capacities and prejudices of his hearers, and thus "became all things to all men," it surely need be no matter of doubt or scruple with christian ministers in having to do with a public becoming every day increasingly intelligent, more and more free from certain religious usages, and growingly sceptical, to address themselves in a style best adapted to such an altered state of things.

If it be true, and the facts already alluded to are ample evidence that it is, that we live in an age of reason, it is no less true that we live in an age of faith. Whether the abuse of reason, which is evinced by those who fall into absolute scepticism, has occasioned by way of contrast and re-action, those manifestations of faith which are characteristics of the present day; or whether the present aspect of infidelity is owing to certain prevailing forms of faith I will not pause to enquire. It is sufficient for my present purpose to remind you that the present age is as truly characterized by faith as by reason, and that as the latter runs into excess, so does the former. As there are multitudes who misuse reason, so there are multitudes who misuse faith. If this age presents very remarkable instances of the sayings and doings of men who profess to follow reason without faith, so does it furnish examples no less remarkable of men who are following faith without reason. Roman Catholicism, which is evidently putting forth unwonted efforts, with more or less success, to recover its lost hold upon the minds of men; and Anglo-Catholicism, which is essentially the same religious element, modified to meet the tastes and prejudices of the English mind, and which by its false aspect and insidious operations, more effectually does the work which is common to both than the premature aggressions of its elder sister, furnish abundant evidence of the tendency that exists to run to the opposite extreme of incredulity, and to renounce in religious things all allegiance to the dictates of reason.

According to the degree and character of the scepticism of our times, so is its credulity. Atheism and superstition are attempting, the one or the other, to occupy the throne of the human spirit. The advocates of each system are compassing sea and land to make proselytes, and neither party seems to imagine that in religious things, is it possible for the two principles, reason and faith, to find an appropriate field or a welcome home.

Christian brethren, these, then, are two of the characteristics of the age in which we live—the two that are much interesting to us as believers in the Bible and advocates of enlightened Christianity. These are two aspects of the public mind that it becomes us to regard, and as far as possible to meet. With this view I have entered on the course of lectures already announced. I commence this course by an enquiry into the real nature and the mutual relation

of these two principles—reason and faith, which receive the very opposite development to which I have referred. We live in the midst of two different sections of society—the one writing on its banner “reason only,”—the other, “faith only.” Let us endeavour to ascertain what each of these principles really is, and thus determine whether in religious things it is necessary to part company with either, or whether it is not possible, right, and necessary to have both.

I ask then, first, what is reason? Without attempting a logical definition, I will give a description by which you will easily and correctly understand the capacity, or principle, of one inner man, which is, strictly speaking, called reason. Reason is that faculty which acquires knowledge. It can apprehend external objects; it can perceive self-evident principles; it can form principles out of given facts, and it can draw conclusions from admitted premises. What it thus argues, is called knowledge.—Reason *knows*. It takes nothing on trust; it depends not on testimony; it is the self-relying, independent—(if we may so speak)—the manly capacity of the mind. Reason is the eye of the spirit, and is of use only in the light. It walks erect, leans on no arm, and receiving nothing at second hand. Its language is, when it has performed its proper work—“I know the thing—I see it for myself.”

What is faith? Faith does not know—does not see for itself. It trusts. It receives the testimony of others. Faith is one mind acting through the agency of another mind. It comes into operation where reason ends. It takes up the work which reason acknowledges it has not power to carry any further. Faith may furnish reason with materials out of which it may conduct its own works. Faith also comes into work when reason ends its labours. Faith is a substitute for knowledge. It is of value only in those minds whose reason is limited. A being endowed with omniscience not only does not believe, but does need faith. Faith, if practicable to such a being, would be as superfluous and as derogatory, as the perfectly healthy body employing a crutch. God does not *believe*—he *knows*. All other beings, being finite in their knowledge, need faith. Faith is the ear of the soul, and depends for full exercise on the testimony of others. Faith does not see the path in which it walks, and can move with the undeviating correctness, and with full composure, in the darkest night.

Thus we distinguish these two capacities: reason sees for itself—faith accepts the testimony of others, respecting matters which it has not, and in many cases cannot see for itself. Without pretending that the description which has thus been given specifies all the characteristics of each, it is probably quite sufficient for the purposes of this discourse.

Admitting the correctness of this description of reason and faith, it remains to ascertain whether the two capacities can exist in the same mind; whether the exercise of the one is necessarily incompatible with the exercise of the other, or whether they can work together with perfect harmony and with great mutual advantage. The bearing of this enquiry on the two great and leading errors of the day, the renunciation of faith in favour of reason in the form of atheism—and the renunciation of reason in favour of faith in the form of Roman Catholicism, is sufficiently obvious.

Can reason and faith act together—can they be mutually helpful? Let us suppose one or two cases. A man is conducting a particular investigation in natural history. He is examining certain rocks, or plants, or animals. A number of instances pass under his careful observation: he cannot reach any satisfactory conclusion with the facts that are before him: he wants other facts: he cannot go in search of them himself. He has by him some books which treat on the very subject upon which he is desirous of obtaining information; or he is acquainted with friends who have in another part of the world seen the facts which he desires to know. By reading, or conversation, he is put in possession of the information which he needed; and thus he works

out certain conclusions. Every one perceives that in this act the individual in question exercises both reason and faith. In such a case the two capacities act, not only in perfect harmony, but with great mutual advantage.

Take another illustration. A traveller is desirous of exploring a given region. He seeks for a guide, who knows the country well. Attended by this companion, the traveller proceeds. The guide is intimately acquainted with every part of the entire district: he has trodden every inch of the ground again and again, and knows every path, every elevation, every glen, every rock, every tree, and every flower. He is sure footed, and undertakes his guidance only in the clear light of day. The traveller is in this case required to take nothing on trust. His companion asks for no such dependence, and contents himself by taking his friend to object after object, and thus enabling him to judge for himself. The guide, however, is limited to that particular region, and to certain objects. Our traveller explores this country, and knows it well, but he is not content—he desires to go further. He has been passed again and again in his researches in this region by pilgrims who were evidently travelling through that country to another. Some faint visions of other regions have occasionally loomed before him, as he indulged his anxiety to go further. He entreats his companion to take him into these unknown lands. Reason refuses to advance beyond its prescribed limits—not from disinclination, but through incapacity. Unable to go himself, he is still able to furnish satisfactory evidence, in attestation of the truth of a certain general directory, which he places in the traveller's hand, and according to which he bids him proceed. He is now no longer attended by a companion who explains everything he meets. He has nothing in his hand but a written testimony, confirmed by reason. With the loss of his companion he has also to deplore the loss of the bright sun, and to grope on in very dim twilight. He may in these circumstances take the right course, and obtain a certain acquaintance with this new region; but still what he learns he gains through a different medium, and acquires with less distinctness. This is the position of the man who having travelled with reason as far as it could go, is now advancing with the assistance of faith.

Need I say, brethren, that these illustrations which I have given in order to show the harmony and mutual helpfulness of reason and faith, are abundantly sustained by the every day realities of life? What is more evident than that all men are at all times walking partly by reason and partly by faith? You are all reasoners, and all believers. You do not take a single step in life without the aid of either reason or faith, or both. In every work which you undertake, there are some things which you know, and some things which you do not know; some things which you receive only by faith. You know, for instance, a certain portion of the present; and you know the past, so far as it has passed under your own personal observation. You know the visible realities of this place of worship, and this congregation—what more of the present state of this world do you know? Do you *know* that your home is in a state of safety at this moment—that your children there are in that state of health and safety in which you left them an hour since? You may *believe* it—you *know* it not. What of the past in our worldly affairs do you know beyond the very small limits of your own personal observation and experience? What would the entire page of history be to you, if you could not receive it by faith? If you are thus shut up to the assistance of faith, in all your profitable acquaintance with the past, I need scarcely remind you of your entire dependence on that principle in respect to the future. You know nothing respecting the time to come. Your own state of existence during the next few minutes you cannot without uncertainty predict. The rising of the sun to-morrow, is an event the certainty of which you do not know. You cannot demonstrate that the sun will rise to-morrow: in the strict use of the word you cannot *prove* it. You may show the extreme probability of such an event taking place—a probability

resting on the uninterrupted occurrence (as you believe) of that daily change throughout thousands of centuries, and on the ordinary regularity of the works of nature. Still, as the supposition of the sun not rising to-morrow involves no absurdity—no contradiction, *you do not know, you only believe, that that event will take place.*

You are mostly engaged in secular business. You have entered into certain engagements, and you are bound to execute a certain amount of work, within a given time, for a certain remuneration. What absolute certainty is there that such agreements will be fully carried into effect? Are there not certain improbabilities as well as probabilities mingling with the whole of these doings? Are you absolutely sure of any one event, among the various series of events that must enter into these engagements, in order to terminate as the present verbal or written agreement specifies? Is not the whole affair a work of faith? Before you entered into your present obligations, had you not to weigh one thing against another? Did not many possible occurrences present themselves to your mind, all of which rendered your success unlikely? and was not the force of the objections overcome, only by your anticipating other circumstances of an opposite character, the occurrence of which was after all nothing but a matter of probability? Are not all human actions—all endeavours to reach certain ends by certain means, the result of probabilities of success being set against probabilities of failure, and the former being found to outweigh the latter? Are we not continually striking the balance in such matters; and thus acting according as the preponderance of probability lies on the side of success? It would be well for you carefully to analyze the mental process through which you invariably pass preparatory to, and in the continuance of your various secular transactions; in order that you may somewhat appreciate the very large amount of uncertainty that mingles with all the transactions of your life; and have some adequate impression of the large extent upon which you are continually drawing on the resources of faith. With all man's exultation in his possession of reason—with all his boasting that reason is his only guide—it will be found on careful analysis, that man's principle guide in all the transactions of everyday life is not reason but faith. You do exercise reason in examining the ground on which your faith rests. Still, faith is the master spring that prompts to action, and sustains you under the various burdens and difficulties of your lot. So true is this, that reason and faith not only act harmoniously in the every-day doings of life, but that the exercise of both is indispensable for the proper management of all human affairs.

As a theist and a Christian, it is impossible for me to contemplate this characteristic of humanity without feelings of satisfaction and hope—satisfaction, because I found my own practice in religion thus far sustained by the example of all—hope, because I cannot help regarding the universal practice of walking by faith in secular things, as furnishing me with an unanswerable argument, and reasonable prospect of success, in my endeavours to persuade my fellow men to walk by faith also in the things spiritual and heavenly. It is very clear that religions men are doing no more in religion than all men are doing in the world. Our consistency is amply vindicated. What are we more than other men? Are they reasoners?—so are we. Are they believers?—so are we. When the world can get on without faith, then, but not till then, will the time come for men to censure the religious for exercising belief. It is not a little comforting amidst the perplexities of religious faith—and amidst painful processes, sometimes, of weighing probability against probability, to know that in this act we are only obeying the law of our common humanity; and that if this process be inconsistent with reason, it is an inconsistency which attaches itself not to us only, but to all men.

Then while the uniform experience and practice of the world, in respect to faith, yields this measure of satisfaction, so far as the vindication of our own consistency, as religious men, is concerned; they are no less encouraging to our

hopes of success in winning them over to the enjoyment of "a like precious faith" with ourselves. It is some encouragement to a missionary to the heathen, in teaching the doctrine of the atonement, to find his hearers already acquainted with the principle of vicarious sacrifice. So is it a ground of hope to the Christian, who would persuade all men to believe in the truth, to find that he has to do with men who are made personally and experimentally acquainted with the nature and value of faith, by exercising that principle in every transaction of their lives. In rendering so necessary the exercise of faith in all secular things, how wonderfully has God been preparing the minds of men for the principles of a religious life, and for the ultimate and universal reception of his testimony to our world! What a training school for the church, may the world ultimately prove to be! What believers all men are—what a necessity is laid upon them to believe! What a wholesome discipline is laid upon their spirits! How evident it is to them that their reason alone is not sufficient for the purposes of this life! How plain it is that they cannot walk at all in this world, unless they are content to walk by faith. O! how appropriate, how kind, how considerate it was for God to come to such a world, and say, "Believe—only believe! All things are possible to him that believeth. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life!"

On what principle of consistency can such a being—such a believer, in all other respects, refuse to exercise faith in religious things? I refer not now to the character of the evidence which religion may present. I take for granted that it is as sound in itself and as abundant as the evidence on which all men build their faith in matters secular. All I mean is, that by habitually exercising faith in worldly things, he is found guilty of the grossest inconsistency, if he refuse to exercise faith at all in matters religious. He cannot consistently say, in respect to all the affairs of this world I exercise reason and faith, but in respect to all matters that lie in any way beyond the limits of this visible earth, I exercise reason only. He cannot consistently refuse to listen to the voice of faith in this second department of enquiry, unless he entirely refuses to listen to that voice in the other. He is not consistent in rejecting the testimony of faith in religion, unless he rejects that testimony in every thing else. If faith is a safe guide in the one thing, it may be in the other. If man honors that guide at all, let him honor it fairly; let him listen to its testimony in respect to the invisible as well as the visible; and reject that testimony, not because it is testimony, because it is not sustained by those credentials which true testimony can always supply, and of which reason, and not faith is the judge. This, we maintain, is the only consistent course which such a believer as man is in all other matters, besides religion, can follow.

But why make religion the one exception, in respect to the exercise of faith? Why have faith in all other practical matters, and not have faith in this? Why? Your reason, atheists, for making religion the one department of thought and action, in which faith is to have no voice at all! You utterly exclude your daily and hourly guide from this field; you do so out of professed deference to the claims of reason! We ask for the warrant of reason for such an exceptional course? We ask for *its* reason for claiming an exclusive authority over the wide range of the spiritual, the invisible, the undying—while it claims no such exclusive sway over the material, the visible, the mortal? If reason does make this claim, it can vindicate it. What is its vindication? On what ground does reason require you to follow her guidance alone in religious things, seeing that she allows you to follow another guide as well, even faith, in things not religious? Unbelieving men, we press you for a satisfactory answer to this question—an answer which will satisfy our reason.

You cannot claim an exemption from faith, in religious things, on the ground of their essential nature, or the way in which they are submitted to our attention. Were religion a question of the pure mental abstraction—a mathematical problem, based on certain self-evident axioms, and to be tested by a

process of the strictest demonstration, we should at once admit, that it necessarily excluded from the minds of all its recipients the exercise of faith. Then it would be a question of reason only. Or if religion brought no testimony at all, and depended for its truthfulness upon no moral evidence at all, then we should say, this is not a matter for faith. If infidels could assign such reasons for refusing to exercise all faith in matters religious we could vindicate their consistency and respect their reason. But as religion is not a question of this kind; as in its very nature it has to do with will, authority, precepts, sanctity, futurity; as the seat of its operations is essentially the moral part of our nature; as it necessarily exerts an influence over the whole of man, through the whole extent of his being; as it involves a recognition of man's subordination to a higher power; it is clear, from the very nature of the thing, that there is no possibility of our giving real and practical attention to such a subject without faith. Religion in its nature necessarily includes within it matters that lie beyond the range of mere consciousness and mere sight. It cannot exist without a recognition of the invisible; it must be accepted and honored by faith. Reason herself says no. Reason herself declares, "My own powers are limited; I can guide within a certain line, but no further. Religion has in it depths and heights, and lengths and breadths, which I have not the power to explore. I cannot guide you through these mysteries myself, but will render you all the assistance I can. I will aid you in examining the credentials and introducing you to the guidance of another—even faith."

This is the language of reason. She proves her sanity by acknowledging the limits of her power; she shews that she is reason, by not aspiring to the office of faith. A greater insult cannot be offered to her, than by attempting to invest her with power that she never claims.

You, then that are claiming the sanction of reason, in refusing all deference to the guidance of faith in religion, are really insulting the authority that you profess to honour. You are not following reason in this course, it is not your reason that makes you reject a religious path. Reason refuses to sanction your proceeding and to be complicated in your hypocrisy. The truth is, your spirits are under a moral bias. You dislike religious obligation, and you cover that real cause of your rejection of its claims under the garb of your professed allegiance to reason.

Reason says to man, "believe." A certain moral bias says, "No: let me be free from all moral restraint." Your motive for excluding faith in religious things is not to honor reason, but to abrogate authority and escape spiritual allegiance. If you would honor reason you would become a believer; but as you prefer freedom from all obligation to a higher authority than your own inclination, you refuse to exercise faith. I am willing to save the credit of your understanding, by not supposing it possible that your reason requires you not to believe; but I must render you that justice only at the expense of your heart. I have not such a poor opinion of your reason as to suppose it possible that it requires you to have nothing to do with faith; but I have such an unfavourable opinion of the state of your moral nature, as to justify me in the assertion that that is the cause of the evil; and that you are an unbeliever, not because you are rational, but because you are a sinful being.

Religion requires faith. It cannot exist without it. But it is not faith against reason or without reason. Religion pays to reason the highest honor it can receive. It acknowledges its existence, it invites its investigations, it waits for its sanctions. It acknowledges no faith which is not in perfect harmony with the dictates of reason. A faith that is derived from human authority true religion does not own. A faith that grasps or attempts to grasp a contradiction, it rejects as an insult to true morality. A faith that acts without a reason it does not sanction. To all men religion says, "you must believe if you would enter my dominion, explore my riches, and luxuriate amidst the revelations that I can give. You cannot walk in this region without faith." At the

same time religion says to every man, "I do not demand this faith, without first obtaining the full concurrence of your understanding. I submit the evidence of my claims to reason. I invite, I require investigation. I value your faith only so far as it is grounded on the evidences that I supply. My ultimate object is to secure the full allegiance of faith; but I aim at that result only by first satisfying the reason. Reason, awake! Reason, shake thyself from the dust! Reason, put on my strength! Come mankind, and let us reason together. Look at my credentials; ascertain my real nature; listen to the witnesses that I bring; exercise the strictest impartiality; prove all things—then, but not till then—hold fast that which is good; acquire *hope*, a bright and glorious hope—the child of faith; but so acquire it, and so maintain it, that placed in whatever circumstances you may, you will always be able to give an answer to every man who asketh you "a *reason* of the hope that is in you."

Permit me to congratulate all true Christians, that their consistency as believers is so completely vindicated by the uniform practice of mankind; and to congratulate them too, that the Word of God, while it necessarily and happily for man requires such an exercise of faith, also furnishes in its internal and external evidence, such abundant response to the requirements of reason. On the consideration of these evidences, we shall enter in the course of these lectures. Permit me, in closing these observations, to appeal to any before me, whose minds may be the victims of any of the various forms of modern scepticism—permit me to intreat them to make themselves first acquainted with themselves—search into your nature. Examine carefully your capacity to know and your capacity to believe. See how continually you are exercising both these faculties in respect to the things of this life. Carry out the same mental habits in respect to the claims of religion. Examine the evidences that it furnishes, and believe according as that evidence is really worthy of your acceptance. Accompany this examination with that spirit of deference, submission and dependance which reason itself sanctions; and of which the greatest minds present most beautiful and consistent exemplifications; and doubt not that you will reach that conclusion which reason and truth will sanction. I anticipate the conclusion, to which I believe a careful and impartial examination of the evidences of the truth of Christianity will conduct you, when I now say, in obedience to what I regard as the truth of God—"Believe—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

TRUE RELIGION ESSENTIAL TO THE FULL DEVELOPMENT
OF MAN'S WHOLE NATURE.

A Lecture

BY THE REV. J. C. GALLAWAY, A. M.

DELIVERED

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"In thy light shall we see light.—PSALM xxxvi. 9.

It was the remark of one who had evidently made human nature one of his principal studies, that "man was the noblest work of God." Supposing that the poet in the view that he took, confined his contemplation to the visible universe—that he did not include in his comparison the wonders of redemption, and all the possible wonders that may exist in that part of God's creation which the human eye has never yet seen—then I believe he uttered a sentiment as true as it is appropriately and beautifully expressed. For man, compared with the vast animal creation around—compared with this globe in its great extent, structure, riches and beauties—compared with the planetary system, of which this world forms a part, and of which the sun is the centre and the life—compared with the countless stars that are scattered over illimitable space, and which yield to enlightened reason and refined taste, such wondrous contemplation and such exquisite delight—man, I say, compared with any part of this marvellous panorama, or compared with the whole, is the most marvellous of all. He is the top-stone that God has placed, so far as we know, upon this magnificent temple which He himself built—the crown of this great visible creation. I would not say this under the influence of partiality or prejudice, because I happen to belong to the race; but I say it believing it to be essentially true, and I think it may be made plain that it is so. We estimate the value of an object not by size, number or duration. We look at the inherent properties of the thing itself, and judge accordingly.

Now this entire universe, of which man forms a part, is divisible into two great elements: matter and mind. Man is the only being throughout this universe, apparent to our eye, that has the endowment of mind. Brethren, when we contemplate mind, and think that it originates material action; that it subordinates matter to its own purposes; that it is free from the restrictions to which matter is subject; that it is the undying principle; that it is capable of indefinite development; that it is of all created things most like the Creator: a spark struck off from that divine luminary; a part of the breath of the Creator himself; I say, when we think that this is mind, and that this is man, then is it evident that man is of all the other parts of the visible creation, the most marvellous of the whole. "Man is [on the ground of his mental endowments] the noblest work of God." This estimate of man is not certainly the view that

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is generally entertained, and practically manifested. The fact that men can contemplate themselves, and look upon each other without veneration, or wonder or respect—that they can despise, insult, and grievously wrong one another—that they can practice and tolerate the grossest licentiousness, rapine, slavery and war, are evidences, to say the least of them, that they cannot hold human nature in that high estimate which the words already repeated express; and which the facts of the case so evidently justify. I feel sure that just as the Apostle said in reference to Christ, that if the Jews had known that he was the Lord of life and glory, they would not have crucified him; so do I think that if men generally formed that high estimate of man, which the truth demands, it would not be possible for them so wantonly and so cruelly to trample under foot a pearl of such a price.

How is it that such low estimate of the dignity of man is generally current? One reason I think is this: that men take such a very *partial* view of the subject. They look at one part of humanity, instead of the whole. Partial views are too characteristic of our mental habits generally. Most objects are surveyed from one position only; its other aspects being overlooked. The view that we do take is often a mere glance, rather than a steadfast investigation; and is more or less warped by prejudice. In this mode we form our opinions of man; and are the more in danger of carelessness in such judgments, because of our hourly familiarity with the theme; and the difficulties that meet us at the threshold, in any attempt to explain the mysteries of the human spirit.

Another reason of our low estimate of man is that we contemplate him rather as he *is*, than as he is *capable of becoming*. I quite admit that there is much in the present state of human nature, to fill any one who carefully surveys it, with grief and shame. But when I speak of the high dignity of that nature I do not refer to its present state; I mean that nature as God created it, as God designed it to be, and as it is still capable of becoming. It can yet be as great as it was in its primæval innocence. Nay, by virtue of the wonders of redemption, it can become far greater than it was then. Human nature, then, is worthy of our reverence, wonder, and exalted anticipation. It is so, so far as we direct our attention to the *whole* of man's nature, and then view it in its *possible* and destined development.

But by what means can it attain to its legitimate development? What is that influence, power or element, that can fully elicit the whole of its capabilities, and make it what it ought to be? This great requisite is—Religion. To make this truth apparent is the object of my present discourse. The topic that I have selected for our consideration this evening is—"True religion essential to the development of man's whole nature."

RELIGION, *i. e.*, true christianity, is essential to bring his nature out, to do it complete justice, to make it in its height and perfection what it is capable of becoming. Religion is designed to do this, it can do it, and nothing else can produce this result. In this fact, among many others, we discover an incontrovertible evidence of the divine origin of the christian religion.

But what do I mean by *religion*—the christian religion? I do not mean by it a name, a form, a pretence, a parade. I do not mean by it any creed that I have ever met with, nor perhaps, any that I may ever meet with in this world. I do not mean by it any mere opinion, nor any set phraseology. I do not mean by it any one church, any one sect, much less any priestly conclave. Then what do I mean? There are obviously two aspects in which religion may be viewed, and according to which the explanation of its nature must be given. It may be regarded in an outward and an inward aspect. *i. e.* in the former of these respects, I mean by religion the nature, government, and will of God as revealed to us in nature, providence, and the Bible. When viewed inwardly, *i. e.* religion as it exists in the heart of the true christian man in accordance with the external rule presented to him, and in virtue, too, of that divine influence which accompanies that revelation, then I understand by re-

ligion such principles as the following: some true apprehension of the divine nature; implicit faith in all God's known revelations of himself; more especially that which is presented in the teaching, character, obedience and atonement of Jesus Christ; a due sense and acknowledgment of our own personal sinfulness and guilt; supreme love to God; implicit submission to the divine will; entire devotedness to the divine glory; the hope of ultimately becoming like God in the heavenly world; pure and earnest benevolence towards all men, and all God's sentient creation.

The true aspects of religion which I have thus presented—the outward and the inward—seem to me to be recognised and illustrated in the passage which I have selected as a motto, rather than a text, to my present discourse—"In thy light shall we see light." "Thy light" is a devout recognition of God's revelation of himself, especially when attended with the indispensable illumination of his Spirit. "Shall we see light," appropriately expresses that inward knowledge and purification which we receive from the divine Source. Brethren, this, then, is religion, and this is the power, the element, the life, the light, call it what you please, that man needs in order to attain that full development and glory of which his nature is capable. Religion is to develop man, not man develop religion; religion is made for man, rather than man for religion. I do not mean to insinuate that in religion you are to do nothing, that nothing can be presented by you on which God can work, and by the full exercise of which your own religiousness is ultimately matured and perfected; I mean that in this matter of human development, God, in the very nature of the case, must be the Prime Mover, but not the *only* Agent—we are to be co-workers with him; we are to exercise to the very utmost all that is within us which can be employed for such a purpose—thought, volition, affection, all you have, let it be active to the very utmost.

Your effort, your working out the great problem of your salvation to the full limits of what you are, the Word of God very explicitly and earnestly requires. Yet you *alone*, or supremely, are not competent to an accurate discovery—a full development, of real religion. You cannot be the maker of your own religion. Growingly prevalent as this notion is—growingly characteristic of this age as it is, we believe it to be radically erroneous, and easily disproved. Man! thou art not able to do this thing! Do it if you *can*—but say not that you can do it, and do it not! Man, if you can create a world, go and do so, and we will stand by, and be the first to acknowledge your true deity. But do not say you *can* do this thing, and do it not. We say that you have not power to make a world; and we say with as much earnestness and full conviction of its truthfulness, you are not competent to make religion. Your intellect cannot fathom the infinite, the invisible, the eternal! You cannot alone determine the existence or gauge the attributes of God. You cannot by yourself reveal to my understanding or your own the actual condition, the future destiny, of this universe; and for you with such a limited range of capacity to say there is, or there is no personal God, when you do not know beyond a very, contracted circle what there may be;—for you to undertake to fathom all moral depths, to give law to created intelligence, is an idle delusion, an immoral pretence. You are not only physically incompetent to such a task, but your actual position, your earthly engagements, and your moral state, absolutely unfit you for such a work.

No, my fellow-man; with all your activity in this great work—and you may have the utmost that your nature is capable of—there must be also an agency put forth by a higher power than yours. There must be an illumination from the source of all light; there must be an opening up of the Fountain of Life, whence your spiritual life will derive its first impulse and perpetual supply. To be religious, you must become a child of the truth, a child of the Spirit, a child of God. "You must be born again, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh; but of God." You must become "a new creature in

Christ Jesus :” Christ must be “formed in you the hope of glory :” Christ must “dwell in your hearts by faith :” you must become the “temples of the Holy Ghost :” you must be “the habitation of God :” you must be “filled with all the fulness of God.” And when you soul fully responds to the divine directions and influences, then, but not till then, will your natures become truly religious ; and then, but not till then, will they attain to that full development, that true dignity, and complete blessedness, of which they are capable, and for which they were designed by your great and good Creator.

Brethren, my remarks up to this point have been *general* : I shall occupy the remainder of this discourse, by entering somewhat into *particulars* ; for this is the only way by which we acquire a distinct and vivid impression of any great truth. I purpose then directing your attention, in succession, to the different parts of which our nature is composed ; and shewing how true religion, as already explained—the light without producing the light within—is essential to elicit and perfect each part, and therefore to do full justice to the whole.

I begin with the lower part of our nature—the animal, the material. Religion is essential to the full development of the functions of the body. A healthy and vigorous state of our corporeal nature can be realized without personal religion. I thank God that it is so. I thank God that he does not afflict all that hate him with broken constitutions and impaired health. He does send his rain on the field of the unjust as well as the just man—a circumstance which ought to lead man to repentance, but which, alas, is too often made the occasion of more boldly denying the existence and the moral government of God. Still, while health is mercifully allotted to men who blaspheme its Giver, it will generally be found to be enjoyed by maintaining habits which, as far as they go, religion could sanction. Men without the restraining influence of religious principles, are unquestionably in great danger of being led into practices which necessarily sow the seeds of fatal disease. Nothing, in certain circumstances, can enable any man to resist temptations to excessive animal indulgence, except religion. The utter abandonment of its restraints, and the utter loss of all the spiritual consolations that it yields, are moreover the most direct and effectual means that man can employ to induce him to seek sensual gratifications only, and in their greatest excess. Can I be charged with uncharitableness in asserting that this tendency of irreligion is strikingly confirmed by facts, and that atheism does lead to gross immorality, broken health, and an embittered earthly existence ? Religion produces placidity of mind, equanimity of temper, kindness of heart, and general acquiescence in the inevitable allotment of life. It frees the spirit from gnawing anxiety, and helps man to look forward to his own departure without terror, and to commit his weeping wife and children to divine providence without fear. Thus religion does the best that can be done for the lower part of our nature in the present world.

Religion, on the other hand, is favourable, directly and indirectly, to health, and earthly enjoyment. It keeps the animal passions within those restraints which nature requires in order to the proper performance of all her functions. It promotes habits of industry, cleanliness, and civility ; it furnishes its possessor with the best personal qualifications for obtaining steady employment and good wages ; and thus to secure for himself and family wholesome food, warm clothing, and good shelter.

But this is not all. Turning to the Bible, which we regard as the Word of truth, and meditating upon its revelations upon the future destiny of the bodies of the righteous, we discover a further security for their well-being, which religion only makes. We know the reality of death by *observation* ; we know the reality of burial by observation ; others will know the reality of it with respect to us some day. We shall have to die—we shall have to be buried. O ! what is it that atheism writes over the tomb of man ? what is it ? “Gone !” “gone !” nothing more. It might add, “annihilation.” But there is to the believer’s ear a voice from the tomb which, echoing the words of revelation, says, “This

mortal must put on immortality; this corruptible must put on incorruptibility; this natural must put on the spiritual; this earthly must put on the heavenly." It is destined to rise again a new body—a spiritual one—and then to enter heaven, and there to appear like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ himself. Religion—blessed boon for man!—it can do the best for his material nature in the present state, and then can perpetuate its blessing upon that body through-out eternity.

Let us now glance at the higher part of human nature—the inner man, the spiritual, the immortal.

I notice first the intellectual powers—*reason*, in the strictest sense of that term. We all know very well that those who deny the truth of the Bible, and deny God, have very complacent notions respecting their own powers of *reason*. They call their age "the age of reason." I have heard them say with some evidently affected humility, "*We follow poor reason: we have got reason, you Christians have got feeling.*" Now, brethren, give me a moment's attention, and I will make it apparent that of all things that help to bring out, develop, and perfect reason, religion is that power. No man who is in the habit of thinking with any accuracy, comprehension, and consecutiveness, is unaware that his power of thought is regulated to a great extent by the state of his feelings. A man under the influence of angry passion, lustful emotion; a man of fretful, peevish, discontented temper, is in that state of heart unfitted for clear, calm, comprehensive, correct thinking. This outbreak of feeling disturbs the equilibrium of his judgment, confuses his views, and warps his conclusions. There is, then, in an irreligious state of mind, something which is very unfavourable to effectual thought. On the other hand, give us the case of a man whose passions are kept under, whose mind is calm, whose disposition is kind, who has a profound reverence for God, who has a confident hope of immortality—a truly religious man; and we say in virtue of the religious state of that man's heart, his intellect is free to think. There is no lowering of the heavens, no moanings of the eastern wind, no thunderings and tempest to keep down the wing of thought, and prevent its free, buoyant, elevated flight.

The purity and well directed fervency of his heart become an incentive to reflection—a gushing fountain of thought—a spontaneous fire, which at once expands the intellectual capacity, and raises the sacrifice of meditation towards the throne of the infinite mind. Just as it is with a child (and many of you know it well) who, when sullen, and sulky, and fretful, cannot master his task, but who, when affectionate and docile, learns his lesson with ease, and especially so, when he is prompted through it all, by the smile of a mother's love; so, brethren, is it with the mind in its matured state. Let the heart be wrong, the intellect is oppressed; let the heart be true, and let the light of God beam on the affections, and intellect puts forth its true force.

We say, brethren, that there is a tendency in religion to enable a man to make the best of his understanding. And when I think of Milton, Newton, Boyle, or Bishop Butler; and contemplate the marvellous exhibitions of their gigantic minds, and remember they were all truly religious men, I feel I am furnished with an incontrovertible evidence in favour of the principle that goodness of heart is eminently favourable to the development of the reason. Contemplate, moreover, as a still further evidence of the beneficial influence of religion on the intellectual powers, the field that it presents to human enquiry—the special aspect in which it presents it—and the impulse it gives to reach to the wonders to which it points. It offers to our investigation the boundless universe, and presents this field of inquiry as the workmanship of God. A man without religion may become well acquainted with the things made—the material mechanism of the visible universe; he may be able to tell us, with great accuracy, the component parts of the crust of the earth; he may furnish a graphic description of animal and vegetable life; he may solve many profound problems in astronomical science—

but if he have no religion ; if he cannot look upon this marvellous framework as the work of an intelligent mind ; if he cannot trace thought and goodness in these visible things, what, after all, is the character and extent of his knowledge ? It is religion only that can enable a man to view the universe in its true meaning, its essential unity, its utmost sublimity, by exhibiting it as the creation of God. It is religion only that can, in this range of inquiry, present to the intellect the widest field of thought, and furnish the most effective impulse to pursue such studies. So with history. A man without religion may have a memory like an encyclopedia ; he may be a marvellous chronicler of events. But this is all. The religious man is the only one intellectually fitted to take the true, the deepest, the widest view of human affairs, by connecting them all with God, and regarding them all as so many manifestations of one overruling mind, as so many gradual developments of one perfect plan.

Then the religious man has his own special book, the Bible, and this he has to study. The Bible far transcends, as a field of thought, all the wonders of nature and providence. All who do truly examine it know, and know well, that the more it is investigated, the wider, the deeper, and the higher is the range of thought which it continually opens up to the mind. Its principle wonder is the plan of human redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ—that manifestation of infinite wisdom, holiness, and mercy !—that most marvellous of all manifestations of the true nature and moral government of God—a work, too, so adapted to man's spiritual necessities, so fitted and designed to benefit the whole human race—a work which has accomplished so much, and which forms such a potent element in the movement of men at the present day ! What a theme of thought ! O, how drivelling, how puerile are all efforts of human intellect, which pass by such wonders ! How true it is that true religion renders the best reverence, and pays the highest honor to human reason ! I do not mean to say that those of you who are not religious cannot think ; but I do mean to say that you have only the fibre or the leaf, and we have the full grown tree ; you are only dissecting the bare dry carcase, and we are studying the living man ; you are gnawing at the shell, and we are tasting the kernel ; you are skimming over the surface, and we are getting down into the depths ; you are groping in the dark, and we are walking in the sunlight ; you have shut yourself up in the narrow dark prison-house of your own self-sufficiency, fancying yourself almost to be the God, whose existence beyond yourself you deny, and we are walking to and fro in this wide, capacious, grand, magnificent field of God, fearing to look at nothing, fearing to hear no voice, believing that there is a God ! and luxuriating in the persuasion that as we advance in the theory, we shall know more and more of himself and his works ; “ We shall know even as we are known.”

Having thus looked at religion in its relation to reason, let us contemplate it briefly in its influence on *taste*.

Religious men are doing a great injustice to religion, if they think they, as religious men, have nothing to do with taste. Such impressions are indications of narrowness of mind. Brethren, God has endowed men with a capacity to discover and to enjoy the beautiful in his work ; and nothing so qualifies a man for this enjoyment and this homage as true religion.

Without entering at all into the question—What constitutes the beautiful, or according to what rules does taste operate ?—and I think your experience will bear me out in this view, that whenever you have had the privilege of leaving this city which man built, and have gone out into the world that God made, and have looked at God's works, you have been prepared to enjoy the beautiful just so far as your hearts were beating with good emotions, and your intellect was in active exercise. A man, without religion, may go into the fields ; and he may pluck a flower ; he may admire its structure, form, tints, and fragrance ; but that is all he can do. A truly religious man can go into that same field ; look with some measure of reverence upon that earth-altar, whence that flower

grew, and then can look at it with the thoughts, emotions, and delights, that may find their audible expression in words like these—"This flower was made by the God I supremely love; he made it in this form, and traced upon it these beautiful lines, gave it these tints, and filled it with this odour, that it might gratify me. I can trace in it the Divine wisdom, skill, taste, and love." The man that can look at a flower in this aspect is the only one that can see it in its true beauty. So let him look at mountains, vallies, forests, rivers: at moon, sun, and stars; and so far as he looks at all, as manifestations of the Divine, will he behold them in their true loveliness.

Let it, moreover, not be forgotten that the sublimest poetry, the finest paintings, the most expressive architecture, the most living sculpture, the most thrilling melody, are all arranged on the side of religion, and thus furnish the clearest evidence of the intimate connection that exists between true taste and true religion. Whatever may have been the religious character of the authors of some of these works, and however mistaken and injurious the use that in some instances has been made of them, the consecration of such works to the service of religion does shew that there must be some affinity between the beautiful and true piety, and confirms the principle that we have endeavoured to defend, that religion is in the highest degree favourable to the cultivation of a refined taste, and so to do justice to this important part of our nature.

Glance at another endowment of our inner man—*conscience*. It is very evident that as man has a sense of the beautiful so has he a sense of right and wrong. Blinded and perverted as this faculty may be, still it is an essential part of our moral constitution, and is not wholly obliterated even in the most depraved. It is by this faculty that we understand duty, and appreciate moral obligation; it is in fact that part of our nature which was not only originally intended to respond to the moral law, but which has its health and enjoyment only in a state of conformity with that rule of rectitude.

What meets the present cravings of conscience, which acknowledges that the law ought to have been kept, but confesses that it has been broken? Christ, "who died the Just for the unjust," Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What is the human conscience without Christ? An appetite without food, a dial without the sun, a magnetic needle without polar attraction. True religion meets the wants and perfects the design of conscience: atheism ridicules, stifles, perverts, and denies them. This, then, is one of the great wrongs which atheism does to humanity; it virtually obliterates one essential part of our nature. Can any proof be clearer that atheism is unnatural, and therefore untrue?

The human *will* is another part of the soul which atheism wrongs, and which true religion only can duly regulate and perfect. The atheist believes, or professes to believe, that the true happiness and dignity of the human will consists in its being absolutely free from all external authority in respect to religious things. So far as this authority reaches no higher than the human—centring either in priest or king—I profess myself one with atheism. I believe it better for each human will to be free from all authority in religious things, than to be the blind tool of a human will as corrupt in itself as other human wills are. I would now leave human nature entirely to its own instincts, not subordinate to the dominion of priestcraft. But there is another course for man to take, after denying the authority of the man in religious things—let him submit to God, let your will bow to the divine, let it be a cheerful response to the voice of your Father in heaven, as it is uttered in nature, in providence, in the Bible; let your will move in the orbit that your Creator and Redeemer has prescribed, and in doing so it will experience its richest satisfaction and reach its highest dignity. Rest assured that there is only one will in this universe in a state of true perfection, and yet acknowledging no higher control—the will of God. But just as it is essential to the perfection of the Infinite to bow to no other authority, so is it essential to the true honor,

satisfaction, and perfection of the finite to yield to the will of the Most High. In saying to God, "not my will but thine be done," the created intelligence finds its dignity and its bliss. In implicit submission to that will it finds its rest and freedom. "I will walk at liberty," says the truly religious mind, "for I seek thy statutes." "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed."

Two other properties of our inner man demand our attention, necessarily rapid as that attention must be. I refer to your capacity to *love*, and your capacity to *hope*. In respect to the power of these nothing can be more obvious than that religion is that one and only element which at once emanates, directs, and satisfies the affections of which our souls are capable. The God whom we adore is "love." The work of human redemption is the highest expression of love which Jehovah could give. The law of christianity is the law of love; all its doctrines, precepts, examples, and spiritual assistance combine to lead the heart of the believer, not to love his kindred only, not to love his friends only, not his country only, but to love all men. Nay, all sentient beings throughout God's universe; and then, not to love the wide range of creatures only, but to love in its strongest, warmest, highest exercise the Supreme Being himself. This is the contentment, the perfection, the utmost possible development of love. Hope is as characteristic of our mental constitution as love. You all step into active life under the impulses of hope; you work on through your different pathways inspired by hope; hope clings to you to the very last. Nothing can meet its aspirations but religion. Religion tells you that this world, with its many troubles, reactions, and revolutions will ultimately become a beautiful and peaceful world, over which Christ will reign. Atheism throws no pleasing rays upon the future history of our world. And what will it do for you, and others dear to you, when you reach the last hour of your present pilgrimage? How eager is atheism to arrest the departing spirit, and exclaim. "No, no; let not the spirit go." How vain the effort! Religion says, "let it go; it goes to a better world—a world where all pure spirits meet to part no more."

This, then, is religion. It is the best for your body, and it is the best for your mind; it elevates your reason, cultivates taste, purifies conscience, disciplines your will, enflames your love, inspires your hope. These benefits are what you want. Then, I say to every man, woman, and child in this assembly, be *religious*, do justice to yourself; you are not true humanity without religion; you are an enigma, an inconsistency, a contradiction, without religion; you are not in harmony with God and God's universe, or yourself, without religion. Man! love thyself, love all that is within thee, do thyself justice, be *religious*, do all you can to make your wife, your children, all around you, religious; work on in this way till you die; believe that in religion the true hope of the world is based. The great want of our world is not organic changes in political institutions, but changes in the human heart. We want not new systems so much as new men. Our world has yet to be made religious; when truly so, what a church will it constitute! what a befitting bride for Christ! what a jubilee it will hold! And when passing through the scenes of the resurrection, and appearing in its spiritual vestments before the throne, and advancing with the ever-increasing glories of the future world, what, under such auspices is human nature destined to become?—A consummation, a perfection, remember that can be realised through the only process of each one comprising that countless throng, becoming a believer in Christ, a true child of God. In "thy light" only, thou eternal God and Father of Man, shall we realise this destined "light."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE GLORIFIED MULTITUDE: OR, THE BELIEVER
IN HEAVEN.

A Sermon

BY THE REV. H. ADDISCOTT,

(OF TAUNTON,)

AT HOXTON ACADEMY CHAPEL, ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 14, 1852.

"After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—REV. vii. 9, 10.

THAT was an important question which the patriarch Job, in the day of his calamity proposed—"If a man die shall he live again?" And since that day that question has been frequently proposed, and differently answered. "Man dieth"—we behold it; he "wasteth away"—we observe it; "he giveth up the ghost"—for some of us have witnessed it; but "*where* is he?" Whither has he fled? We cannot pierce the heavens, and follow the spirit in its trackless flight: its going hence is imperceptible; and the veil which separates eternity from time is neither to be penetrated or to be drawn aside; so that we are prevented from beholding his future destiny. Hence difficulty has surrounded the question, and difference of opinion has existed in regard to the answer. The nations of antiquity, renowned for their superiority in the arts and sciences, in literature and arms, were constantly exhibiting their ignorance by the subtle, refined, absurd, and contradictory speculations which they presented. Although the arts adorned their temples and public buildings; though eloquence echoed through the porches of their temples; though orators, philosophers, legislators, and warriors graced the ages of antiquity—yet, on the subject of man's future destiny, all their speculations evinced their ignorance, and plainly declared that the subject infinitely surpassed the utmost stretch of human wisdom. Eternity was to them "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light was as darkness." To confirm this, I might introduce the various opinions entertained by those who were esteemed the wisest men among the most enlightened nations of antiquity. One declared death to be "an eternal sleep; the dread of the rich, the desire of the poor, the inevitable event, the robber of man, the flight of life, the dissolution of all things." Another taught that "death was a state of rest from all trouble, and not of torment; that it put an end to all the evils of life to which men are subject, and beyond which there is no room for care or joy." Socrates, esteemed the purest of philosophers, expresses his uncertainty on this momentous topic, thus—"In death we either lose the sense of all things, or, *as it is said*, go into some other place, and if so, it will be much better." Taking his farewell he adds—"I must now depart to die, while you continue in life, but which of these is better, the gods only can tell; for in my opinion no man can know this."

No. 23.

Thus we discover that the question with which we introduced this subject, was to ancient philosophers very difficult of solution. And why? They had no guide but reason; no light but nature, no revelation from heaven, bringing light and immortality to light, had saluted their ears; the glorious sun of eternal truth had never beamed upon their path, partially dissipating the shadows and clouds which envelope the eternal state. Hence they wandered in darkness, perfect, unmixed, and awful, like the grave to which they were going—the empire of night. But when we direct our attention towards those upon whom some rays of the light of revelation had beamed, how striking is the contrast! Ask Job the question—"If a man die shall he live again?" and what is his answer? "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," &c. Jacob dying could say—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." David contemplating the sepulchre, exclaimed—"I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness." Simeon could contemplate the future with calm tranquility, and say—"Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." And Stephen, amid the persecutions of his bitter enemies could say—"Into thy hands I commit my spirit." Whilst Paul, without speculation and without hesitation, could affirm—"We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," &c. 2 Cor. v. 1. And do you enquire, why this manifestation of confidence, and desire, and joy? We answer, their pathway to the tomb was irradiated by the light of revelation, which points man to eternity—to the destiny of the soul—teaching it that it does *not* pass into annihilation, but that (losing none of its consciousness) it passes from the investment of flesh into a separate state of existence, happy or miserable, according to the present character and state of the individual—presenting heaven to the believer, and hell to the unbeliever.

To the destiny and glory of the saints our attention is directed, as unfolded by John in prophetic vision, while he was suffering for his adherence to God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And whilst I am endeavouring to unfold the text remember you are on your way to the eternal world; that you must either form part of that multitude that shall sing—"Salvation unto God and the Lamb," or a part of that number who shall cry—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

The glorious state of the redeemed.

I. *The individuals presented to our view.* "A multitude which no man could number, &c." How often has the Christian put the question to himself—"Is my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?" Curiosity—yes, and more than curiosity—deep anxiety about the future safety of his spirit, would lead him sometimes, if he could, to turn over that Book of Life, and if possible, read his worthless name recorded there. But, my hearers, you cannot do it; that is a book which no man can open. Upon its leaves the names of the believers are registered, but you cannot touch its leaves, you cannot read its pages, you cannot find your name. Nevertheless, be assured, that if the knowledge of that fact were necessary to our comfort, even *that* would God have revealed to us. But "we walk by faith, and not by sight."

Much curiosity, also, has been excited in the minds of men, and has been manifested in their speculations and enquiries relative to the *number* who shall ultimately form the church triumphant. Some have asked in the spirit of vain curiosity, "Are there few that shall be saved?" And they have imagined that the number of the lost will exceed the number of the saved; that fewer voices shall proclaim "salvation," than those that shall send forth the cry of despair. My brethren, we have nothing to do with the question—"Are there few to be saved?" We have everything to do with the question—"Am I among the number?" Hence Christ said to those persons who put it—"Strive *thou* to enter in at the strait gate." As if he had said to them, "What is it to you, if the whole world should be saved, and *you* should be lost?"

We do not think that the number of the lost will exceed the number of the saved. If "Christ in *all* things is to have the pre-eminence," assuredly he will have it in the number of the saved over the lost. However, the text assures us

they will not be "few," but innumerable. The powers of the human mind are great, and it is able to put forth great powers of arithmetical calculations. Take the hairs of your head—you may number them; the sands on the sea coast within a prescribed limit—you may enumerate them: but can you count the stars which deck the firmament? Can you number the sands which girt the ocean? Can you reckon the drops of morning dew, which glitter in the sunbeams? Can you add together the drops of water that composes the trackless sea? Can you calculate the rays of light which emanate from the orb of day? You cannot: and why? They are innumerable—beyond the reach of human calculation. So great, then, and greater, will be that multitude which John saw, exceeding the stars of heaven for multitude, and the sands which are by the sea shore innumerable; for the progeny of the Redeemer's empire shall exceed the drops of morning dew—"A multitude which no man can number."

Again: He describes them as to their *diversity*. He says they are of "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." There is doubtless here a reference to the prejudices which existed in the Jewish mind with regard to the possession of spiritual privileges by any but that nation. As if John had said to them, "Heaven is not for you to the exclusion of the Gentile world. I have seen the sealing of the hundred and forty and four thousand;" which may be regarded as comprehending the Jewish nation. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude of ALL nations, and people, and kindreds, and tongues." Yes, "they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south; and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Heaven is not for the inhabitants of Britain, to the exclusion of the inhabitants of Africa; it is not for the inhabitants of the southern sea to the exclusion of the inhabitants of India. It is for the Jew and the Greek, the Scythian and barbarian, the bond and free—for men of all ages, countries, colour, clime, and conditions. "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to the windows?" Lift up your eyes around about, and see all they that gather themselves together: they come from all parts of the habitable globe; they come in obedience to that God who says, "O, earth! earth! earth! hear the word of the Lord!" They come, directed by the light of the gospel, which is destined to enlighten the whole world. They come, attracted by the cross of the Redeemer, who said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." They come, moved, and taught, and quickened by that Spirit which is to be poured out upon all flesh. They come, renouncing their idolatrous systems, casting their idols to the moles and bats, and calling upon the true God. They come, as the fruit of their Saviour's death, the trophies of his victories, the triumph of his gospel—and where are they going? To augment that number who, out "of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue," stand before the throne; and daily is their number augmenting. What a source of encouragement is this thought to the missionary who has gone forth to engage in open hostility with the powers of darkness; not with carnal weapons, but with those which are mighty through God carrying the banner of the cross under the guidance of the great Captain of salvation, with his life in one hand, and his Bible in the other. He occupies the field of the enemy, and engages with depravity, ignorance, superstition, and all the abominations of idolatry. He falls in the conflict, his hand lets go the standard which he unfurls; his Captain leads him home, and he leaves the field to be occupied by others. And does this spiritual warfare cease? No, others succeed: nor shall it be given up until the banner shall be planted upon every place of satan's territories; until the shout of universal victory shall be heard, and the cry ascend from a regenerated world—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ." Then shall praise to God ascend from every state, and hallelujahs to God and the Lamb shall be the universal anthem on earth which shall be echoed back by the redeemed in heaven.

II. *The delightful situation which they occupy.* "They stand before the throne and before the Lamb."

Who are these pure and bright intelligences who wait the will of their Creator—whose spotless spirits have never been contaminated by sin—whose

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celestial minds have never been veiled by the clouds which transgression has thrown around the human mind—whose peaceful breasts have never heaved with sorrow? *Who* are they? They are the holy angels—the ministers of Deity, ever ready and employed to execute his commands, flying through the midst of heaven on untiring wing at the mandate of their Creator. *Their dwelling place* is heaven; they stand round about the throne, and gaze upon the divine glory.

But this exalted privilege is not confined to cherubim and seraphim, it is the dwelling place of the spirits of “just men made perfect.” Our text speaks of a “multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue.” How often has the question been asked—“Where is heaven? point us to its locality; disclose to us what place in the universe of God it is situated.” My brethren, we are not here to answer this question. Where heaven is we do not presume to decide; what it is, is not fully revealed; suffice it to say, the residence of the saints, the dwelling place of the glorified, is where peculiarly the throne of infinite goodness and glorious majesty is erected—where the Saviour is enthroned, seated at the right hand of authority and power;—that is heaven, wheresoever its locality may be. We might in imagination follow the path which our ascending Redeemer took, when from Olivet’s mount he went up with a shout, preceded with angelic harbingers, piercing the clouds, and passing by unnumbered worlds, he left behind him all created light, and entered where the light of heaven with its flood of glory spreads continual brightness amidst perpetual and meridian day:—where the songs of celestial spirits bursts upon the ear, and voices with delightful harmony pour forth their melody loud as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunders exclaim, “Allelujah! blessing and glory, honour and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever;” and having thus far followed Jesus, and beheld him take his station, you are in the midst of the city, in the immediate presence of God, all his glories blazing around you, and *there*, in whatever part of the universe may be its locality, *there* dwell the redeemed and glorified multitude.

A more interesting and edifying enquiry for us is—*Who* are they thus elevated? Not always thus, their present state being a contrast to their former state. “What are these, and whence come they?” were interrogations put by one of the elders, and the fourteenth verse contains the answer. Yes,—

“Once they were mourners here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.”

Formerly at a distance from God by wicked works, their backs turned upon heaven, and hastening towards perdition, some were on the very verge of that awful abyss, within sight of the flames, within hearing of the shrieks, which were continually ascending from it; “as brands plucked from the burning;” and as they were hastening onward, regardless of consequences, they were arrested, Omnipotence stood before them. Unable to proceed, trembling beneath the horrors of a guilty conscience, dreading the vengeance of a holy God, awaiting the execution of his wrath, and expecting immediate destruction, they heard the voice of mercy proclaiming pardon, and saying, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” and then they were directed, and led into the way of peace, their faces were Zionward, and they began to tread the narrow way. But they continued at a considerable distance from God: permitted to have communion with him, they approached the “throne of grace” trembling, weeping, doubting, seeking with a guilty soul, a sorrowful spirit, and saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” But after many alternations, misgivings, and defeats, the last hour came, the time of full discharge, a voice addressed them—“Come up hither.” They ascended to their Father, and to your Father.

“All their sorrows left behind,
And earth exchanged for heaven.”

But where are they now? They stand before the throne of God and the

Lamb. Believers, what we are *now* they were once. In the wilderness among the thorns, our souls sighing to burst their fetters, to be emancipated from their tabernacle; but *if* believers, we are following "them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises,"

"More happy, but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven."

"They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see."

Our feet will shortly touch the chilling stream of the river of death; the dark valley is near; but shall we fear to enter? No, while he who "kills and makes alive" says "I am with thee." Do we fear to approach the river? Who says "when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee?" He of whom it is said, "this God is our God, and he will be our Guide even unto death." The clouds may gather, the storm may rage, its waves may roll, and we may be unable to see the haven of eternal rest which lies beyond it, but under the guidance of your Saviour, who will preserve you from sinking beneath the foaming billows, you shall be carried safely over the swelling flood to the peaceful shores of the New Jerusalem, and conducted by some of the angelic host, passing through their ranks you shall appear before your God, receive your crown, take your station, and thus form a part of the innumerable multitude, and "stand before the throne."

III. *The dignified appearance they present.*—"Clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

You perceive, my brethren, the language is figurative, but it is expressive and appropriate. The sacred writers when they would give us a description of spiritual and eternal things invariably present them to us through the medium of things which are visible; to effect this, they range over creation's works, they group together all that is lovely, attractive, useful, and desirable, and impressing it with the seal of eternity, exhibit it to our view as a faint emblem of heaven. Thus of that place it is said, "the sun shall no more go down, its moon shall not withdraw her shining;" there no night overcasts the sky, but an uncreated and everlasting light renders useless that which is material; there is an eternal spring, unwithering flowers, rivers of life, trees clothed in unfading verdure, and bearing perpetual fruit; there is the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" "a city having foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" there are thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, songs and harps, pearls and gold, crowns and sceptres, robes and palms. It brings all these things together in order to give us a faint and indistinct idea of the future world.

But what is meant by the expression "clothed with white robes?" The expression "white" is employed in Scripture as emblematical of purity, dignity, and happiness, which will peculiarly apply to the redeemed around the throne, as exhibiting—

1. *The purity of their nature.* Among the ancients "white was an emblem of *innocence*, and in Scripture employed to designate *purity*—freedom from defilement. Thus David prayed, "purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." God by Isaiah addressing the Jews who had deeply polluted themselves by their transgression, thus speaks, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as *white* as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as *white* as wool." Of the few among the church of Sardis who had not *defiled* their garments it is declared "they shall walk with Christ in *white*;" and those before the throne are said "to have come out of great tribulation, to have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here is a reference, doubtless, to the justification of their spirit through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and the sanctification of their nature by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Believer, there is no stain upon the glorified soul—

"Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame."

THE GLORIFIED MULTITUDE.

For when the spirit of the believer is emancipated from the clogs of mortality, and the vile body descends to the sepulchre, he bids an eternal farewell to sin, and purified from all uncleanness, he enters where nothing that defileth is permitted to exist, appearing perfect and complete as the poet describes.

2. It exhibits the *dignity* of their situation. White robes of fine linen were the habiliments worn by kings and princes; in these they were arrayed as emblems of royalty. The white robes were not the garb of the slave, the peasant, or the common soldier, but of the king. And who are these now standing before the throne thus apparelled? "Kings," says the apostle, for from their blissful station thus they cry "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us *kings* and priests unto God," &c. Well might the apostle exclaim "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Whom do men despise when they treat a true believer with contempt? One whom an earthly monarch might envy. At whom do they point the finger of scorn? A prince in disguise. At whom do they scoff when they call the humble follower of Christ a fanatic, a misanthrope, an enthusiast? Who? The heir to an incorruptible inheritance, an immovable throne, an unfading crown. Thus does God "raise the poor from the dunghill, and sit them among princes." You may with Lazarus sit on the outside of the gate on earth, but if a believer like Lazarus you shall sit down on a throne in heaven; though like your Master you may not have where to lay your head, yet a kingdom (Luke xii. 32.) awaits you in glory. You may be treated with indignity by man, but dignity awaits you from God. The mudwall cottage may be the spot on earth where you shall breathe out your departing spirit, but a throne of immortality shall be the place in heaven where that glorified spirit shall shine for ever and ever.

3. It exhibits the *happiness* of their spirit. White robes were worn among ancient nations on festive occasions—on the celebration of warlike victories and marriage ceremonies as tokens of joy and pleasure, whilst the black robe was an expression of mourning and distress. Ah! my hearers, the black robe is worn often on earth; it is only the white robe that shall be put upon us in heaven. We wear a mingled garment here, for even in laughter the heart is made sad, and the smile and tear are blended oftentimes upon the same cheek; but no tear shall blend with the smile of eternity, no sigh shall rise to interrupt the song.

A garden without a thorn is that in which the redeemed shall walk, a sky without a cloud is that beneath which the redeemed shall dwell, an ocean without a storm is that on which the spirit shall bosom itself, for

"There we shall bathe our weary souls
In seas of heavenly rest;
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across our peaceful breast."

Again. The glorified are represented as bearing "palms in their hands." This exhibits their state as one of conquest, and supposes conflict. The palm branch was carried before conquerors in their triumphant entrance into their capitol.

The life of the believer here is not characterised by idleness, indifference, and indulgence. Whatever view we take of the christian we shall discover he is called to labours, and that of the most arduous and painful kind. Hence he is compared to a wrestler, "not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world;" to a racer, and you are to "lay aside every weight," and to "run with patience the race that is set before you," and "so run that ye may obtain." Keeping in view the prize, the incorruptible crown which is promised to all who reach the goal; to a warrior, having many battles to fight, many enemies to oppose, many victories to obtain ere he receives the palm-branch of victory.

But for this spiritual conflict God has provided armour which is invulnerable, resources which are inexhaustible; he bestows courage which is invincible, and a Leader who is ever victorious; who has already conquered, and is still going

on conquering and to conquer, even the great Captain of our salvation. Our banner in this spiritual conflict is the cross; our armour you will see described in Ephes. vi; our weapons are not carnal. Thus equipped by the Spirit, and led forward by the Son, we have to wage war with Satan, our great adversary; sin our inveterate enemy; the world our insidious foe; and our own heart not the least of our antagonists. But notwithstanding this formidable array, victory is promised, for we shall become "more than conquerors through Christ who has loved us;" and we shall ultimately triumph, not in our own strength, or by our own skill, but through the blood of the Lamb. But there is no victory without fighting, no conquest without combat. We must grasp the sword, ere we shall bear the palm. Who are these that the text represents? They who while here entered the field, engaged in open hostility with the powers of darkness.

May we, like them, have a good warfare! Then, being here the warrior, *there* we shall be the conqueror. The helmet of salvation will be replaced by the diadem of glory; the breast-plate and the shield will be taken off, and the white robe put on; the shield of the Spirit will be laid down, and the palm branch of victory taken up; the field of conflict will be left for the land of rest, and the groan of the battle-field will be lost in the song of triumph!

It represents their state as one of rightful possession. They realise the blessedness promised, the prospect of which had animated and sustained them amid discouragements and trials. They have received their reward—have entered upon their inheritance, of which no power can deprive them, where no enemy can molest them, where Satan cannot tempt, sin cannot pollute, trial or affliction cannot harass them; but where serene and blessed they cry, "Salvation unto God and the Lamb."

IV. *The holy employment in which they are engaged.* "They cry with a loud voice, Salvation to our God and the Lamb." Diversified are the opinions entertained respecting the nature of the employments which will occupy the glorified for ever. Some suppose that the same engagements which now call forth their powers in the body, will be pursued by them hereafter. This, with many other theories which might be adduced, is mere speculation, and is an attempt to be wise above what is written.

The state of existence in heaven will not be one of inactivity; the pure capacities and continually expanding powers of the human mind will not remain unemployed; if, engaged in studying the operations of the Divine hand in His works, the government of God throughout the universe, the glory of the divine character; or rendering to him supreme worship and unmingled reverence, whilst admiring his wisdom and power, his benevolence and love; eternity is thus employed by man.

Our text declares a *specific* employment: Praise.—Perfect, united and unmingled praise will be presented to God and the Lamb. This was the peculiar worship of Eden; and it is the glorious engagement of heaven: for they cry with a loud voice, Salvation to our God and the Lamb."

1. *The subject of their praise: salvation.* Their deliverance from a state of sin, misery and death, and an introduction into a state of eternal happiness, of perfect and lasting fellowship with God. This is calculated to inspire the souls of the redeemed with praise—a theme worthy the notes of angels. If temporal deliverance awakens praise in those who have experienced them, how much more shall spiritual deliverance! In this life what a joyful sound to fall upon the guilty sinner's ear, "This day is salvation come to thee!" 'Tis life, 'tis joy, 'tis peace. He who is the subject of it, though once on the very threshold of perdition, is brought within the gate of heaven, before the throne of God, delivered from everlasting burnings, and put in possession of eternal joys. Salvation! Oh, most propitious and transporting sound! Amazing that ever we should have heard of it; yet it *has* come to us. But for this salvation the voice of divine justice would have reiterated, "Pay me that thou owest!" "Do this and live." We should have lived for ever beneath the summit of Sinai's awful mount amidst its thunderings and tempest, terrified and alarmed by the

awful denunciation, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of of the law to do them." Our present existence would have been characterised by continued misery and increasing despair, and death would have removed us from this tremendous scene to one more awful and enduring—even to the blackness and darkness of the eternal lake, where God would have rained upon us for ever and ever "Fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest."

But it is not so. Salvation is proclaimed to a guilty world. A Saviour is exhibited; the voice of mercy is heard; we are invited to the cross with "Look unto me and be ye saved," &c. Many have looked by faith and received the promised salvation: a new song has been put into their hearts, even "salvation." Here feeble are the notes, imperfect the strain, and interrupted the songs; yet they now sing—

"Salvation! O the joyful sound!"

And though the tongue becomes silent in death, immediately the spirit, standing before the throne, renews the song in loud, perfect and perpetual strains, and cries, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

2. The Beings to whom they ascribe this salvation. First,—God; for He formed the wondrous plan. He remembering us in our low estate, appointed a Saviour and a great one—gave his only begotten Son, and thus they praise Him who is worthy. Instead of permitting us to stand before his throne, and sing salvation, he might have ascended his throne of judgment, and summoning us before him, have denounced us as accursed, and banished us for ever from his presence, where, instead of shouting salvation, the burden of our cry would have been, "we are *not* saved." Secondly—the Lamb. To Him they likewise ascribe it. To Him they are indebted for their great, glorious, and everlasting deliverance. He redeemed them; obtained eternal redemption—deliverance from the wrath to come. They owe to Him the actual enjoyment of complete happiness, and the certain prospect of its everlasting continuance, instead of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. To Him they are indebted for their throne, their crown, their robe, their palm, their song; for He is their Saviour, Redeemer, and they sing "Salvation to the Lamb."

What a glorious state is the believer encouraged to anticipate, when earth is exchanged for heaven. "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" Trembling on the verge of the eternal world, and my pilgrim feet touching the chilling stream of Jordan, with hope in my heart, with Christ in my soul, with heaven in my view, I can say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But how important the enquiries, each individual putting it to himself, "Shall I form a part of the great multitude?" Are you one of the "little flock" here? You must be a living stone in the temple here, would you form a part of the glorified church above? "Shall I stand before the throne of God?" Do you *now* approach his throne? You must shew the tear of penitence, and from your heart utter the cry for mercy would you praise him in glory. He that would stand and praise before the throne in glory, must here bow and wrestle in prayer before the throne of grace. "Shall I wear the robe and bear the palm?" Are you *now* arrayed in the righteousness of Him who died for your sins, and rose again for your justification? Without his righteousness imputed to you by faith *here*, you will be naked and exposed to the wrath of God hereafter. Are you now fighting the good fight of faith? There is no palm in heaven but for the good soldier of Jesus Christ. "Shall I sing salvation?" Have you already commenced that song? The first note of that anthem is struck *here*, not there! Know you Christ as your Saviour? Without Christ here it will be weeping instead of singing—destruction not salvation—hell, not heaven—devils, not Christ. We are all going into eternity.—We are going to heaven or to hell! Where are you going? Where? Where?

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE GREAT PURPOSE OF LIFE.

A Sermon

BY THE REV. H. ADDISCOTT,

(OF TAUNTON,)

AT HOXTON ACADEMY CHAPEL, ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1852.

“O magnify the Lord with me.”—PSALM XXXIV. 3.

WHAT is the chief end of being?—What is the great purpose of existence?—Why do you live? This is an important question. It is one which is not sufficiently considered—a question which is not unfrequently asked. Why do you die? is soon answered. Scripture replies, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Our bodies mortal became sinful. The consequence of sin is death. Had there been no transgression there would have been no dissolution. Had the body never been polluted by sin, it had never seen corruption in the grave. Had we possessed an angel’s purity, we should have possessed an angel’s immortality; and death would have been as great a stranger to earth as it is to heaven. Hence, if we gain the region of absolute purity, and there resemble angels, neither shall we die any more. Sin and death are inseparable companions. The seed bringeth forth fruit: every seed his own body. Sin is the seed, death is the fruit. Hence the apostle Paul connects the two together when he says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?” He had not been wretched without sin, and his body had not been a body of death, had it not previously been a body of sin.

ALL death is traceable to sin. It is the cause of the *second* death as well as the first. “The wages of sin is death.” If, my brethren, we had never sinned we should have known nothing of hell or the grave: they had been unknown places to pure humanity. Heaven would have been the eternal dwelling-place of the whole family of man. The question then,—Why do I die? is soon answered; but, why do you *live*? What purpose have you in view? What end do you intend to accomplish? To look at this question carefully; to study it prayerfully; to place it rightly before the conscience and the heart—will be to prevent us from experiencing the second death.

No. 24.

There are many things connected with life, which are simply speculative in their character; there are many mysterious problems associated with life. What is life in its essence? We say we live; we call ourselves living creatures; we talk about having physical, sentient, mental existence; that we act, and feel and think. We pass before each other, acting, feeling, thinking beings; and this is going on daily in the presence of each other; and we say that is *life*. And so it is in essence: all this is arrested, broken up; stillness, unconsciousness succeeds; there is no motion, sensation, or thought. Let change come over us, let thought depart, let feeling cease, let action die, let stillness come over that active frame, let unconsciousness rest upon that thinking and feeling principle, and when it is gone you say, that is *death*. But these are only the signs, the manifestations of life and death; these are only the outward phenomena which distinguish the one principle and the other; but what life is in essence, and what death is in essence, are mysteries which none can explain—are problems which none can solve.

And then the modes of life how diversified! the trials of life how many! the mercies of life how numerous! the changes of life how frequent! and the brevity of life how short! It is a vapour; it appeareth for a little time. Your flesh is compared to "grass;" your days are compared to the "weaver's shuttle;" the glory of your existence is like the flower that fadeth—how short a thing is life! And then the circumstances of life: where we shall live, and when we shall cease to live, are all important questions. But there is no question so important as this—Why did God give you life at all?—Why do you live? This is a stern, real enquiry. To it my text is the answer:—"To magnify the Lord." Hence David says, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Fail to do this my hearer, and your life may be an active, and busy, and long life, but it will be an awful mistake, a fatal error, an entire deception, an irretrievable failure! If you do not "magnify the Lord," you neither realize the great purpose of being, nor do you accomplish the great end of existence.

Our subject, then, this morning, is *the great purpose of life*. To answer the important question—Why do I live?—why has God given me existence? In directing your attention to this subject, notice,

1. What is included in magnifying the Lord;—what we are to understand by it. There are many utterances and words in Scripture, employed to express the same idea that is contained in the words, "magnify the Lord." David uses a parallel expression to this phrase when he says, "Let us exalt his name together." God means the same thing when he says, "those that *honor* me I will honor:" and Christ expressed the same thought when he said, "I have *glorified* thee on the earth." To "magnify" God, then, is not to give greater perfection to his nature, is not to throw a brighter glory around his throne, is not to add to his happiness, or to increase his greatness—it is not in any way to affect God, but to "magnify the Lord," is so by our conduct to present him to the world that they may magnify him also: it is to "speak well of his name;" it is to "shew forth his praise:" it is in the language of the context, to "bless the Lord at all times, to have his praise continually in our mouth:"

it is for our soul to make our boast in the Lord, so that "the humble, hearing thereof, may be glad." It is to manifest that conduct, which, harmonizing with his will, and setting forth his moral character, declares him to be what he is, to those who hate, to those who despise, to those who reject him.

Notice, then, the following things, as included in "magnifying the Lord." *It is to make his character the object of contemplation*, and thus to know him. God has given you, my hearers, a mind; he has endowed that mind with capabilities; given to it powers of thought and powers of feeling. But whilst he has given you that mind, he has presented to you objects which shall engage those powers, which shall call out those feelings." Now to "magnify" God in relation to your own mind is to make him the object of your contemplation—to know God, this is life eternal. To know God, is a proper employment of the mind. David had the Lord always before him; his eyes were continually toward the Lord, to meditate upon his character, to reflect upon his conduct, to seek to have some consistent, and comprehensive, and practical knowledge of what God is.

The highest, the noblest, the most suitable employment of the human mind is to contemplate its Author, to have regard to Him who gave it being, and made it what it is. To know God as far as he is revealed in the Scripture, to know God as he has unfolded himself in his word, as he has declared himself in his will, as he has manifested his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to view his perfections, to look into his nature, to contemplate his work, to have respect unto him as the Father, who awakened our thought, and called forth our feeling, is to "magnify the Lord." This is the first step in preparing us to magnify him. You cannot "magnify the Lord" unless you know him; you must have some conception of his character, you must have some insight into his nature, you must have some idea of what God is, and you can only have that idea by prayerful contemplation of his Word, which presents God to you, and says, "Behold your God." Knowledge of God is necessary to trust in God: without trust in God we dishonour God. Now if we would "magnify the Lord" by trusting him, we must know him—"They that *know* thy name, says the Psalmist, "will put their *trust* in thee."

It is to make his law the object of our love, and thus honor him by obedience. David, who said in the text, "O magnify the Lord with me," said, "O how I love thy law; it is my meditation day and night." And elsewhere he says, "Thy law have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." To love that law which is holy, just, and good, which is the declaration of the divine mind, which is the unfolding of the divine will, the uttered requirement of his demand upon us, by which he asserts his right, measures our ability, tests our willingness, which is the command of the Creator to the creature, which points out to him the relation which God sustains to him, the things that God expects of him; that law which is the embodiment of the eternal will, which is the declared utterance of the divine mind, which, given to us, stamps us with accountability, and tells us that God expects obedience, or will visit with punishment.

II. *It is to acquiesce in his conduct as the manifestation of wisdom, and thus to*

confide in him, resting in him under discipline, guidance, bestowments and bereavements. We never honor a man more than when we put entire confidence in him; we never dishonor a man more in the estimation of a neighbour or a friend than when we throw suspicion upon his character—than when we express doubt concerning his faithfulness or his kindness, his veracity or his benevolence; especially will he feel that dishonor if he be remarkable for either of these virtues. Now, my brethren, to “magnify the Lord” is to acquiesce in all the dispensations of his will. It is not simply to do as he commands, it is to suffer what he brings. If he command we obey; if he visit with chastisement we endure; if he bring upon us bereavements we acquiesce; we rest in the Lord, and that is *the* act of the mind that would “magnify the Lord;” for thus resting, the soul patiently waits for him, believing that he will bring it to pass.

It is to recognise Him as the exclusive source of all good, to seek him as the Fountain of all supply. It is to believe that expression—“every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, and from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning,” to acknowledge him in all our ways, to receive our blessings as coming from his hand; and not only to think that “in him we live, and move, and have our being,” but to connect him with our common mercies, to associate him with every blessing that we enjoy, to see his hand as we walk the earth, leading us by the right way, to hear his voice speaking to us in language not to be mistaken, directing our path, and governing us in all our circumstances, to feel that he undertakes for us, that whilst he “leadeth forth the hosts of heaven by number, calling them all by name,” he “numbers our steps,” that whilst he upholdeth the universe with a word, he keepeth our way, that whilst he is the object of adoration by angels, we are the objects of his care and regard; that whilst he upholds with one comprehensive glance the whole intelligent creation that his hand hath formed, he numbers the hairs of our head; it is, my brethren, to “commit our way unto the Lord,” to acknowledge him in *all* our ways, not only when he gives, but when he takes away—not only when he smiles, but when he frowns—not only when he opens up the fountain in the desert, but when he dries up the stream of comfort over which we have bent—not only when he causes the sun to shine brightly on our path, but when he brings a cloud of darkness to rest on our way. To “magnify the Lord” is to “trust,” as David said, “in him at *all* times.”

It is to yield ourselves entirely to Him. To obey that comprehensive, difficult, but delightful evangelical precept of the Apostle, when he says in the twelfth of Romans, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service,” to keep nothing back, but to present everything; to say, “I am not mine own; I am bought with a price, therefore will I glorify him in my body and in my spirit, which are his.” It is to feel that God is the proprietor over us, that he has a claim upon us, that he has a right to us, that we have nothing which is so entirely our own that God has no interest in it, that God has no claim upon it. It is to move towards the altar, and place

upon that altar ourselves as the sacrifice, and to say in humble faith, and with holy resolution, "I am thine, take me, use me for thy service and for thy love." Thus, my brethren, to "magnify" the Lord is to "know" him, to "obey" him, to "trust" him, to "acknowledge" him, and to "give ourselves to him."

Further, You may see what it is to "magnify the Lord" by looking at that which is opposed to it. To magnify the Lord is opposed to *forgetfulness of God*—that has not God in remembrance. Of the wicked it is said, "God is not in all their thoughts." A mind without God in thought is a dishonoring mind; a mind that shuts God out of itself is a mind which fails to glorify its Creator. And then it is opposed (for I can only touch upon these points) to *rebellion against God*,—that despises all authority. What a contrast between that mind that tramples God's law under his feet, and thereby dishonors the Giver, and that mind that takes up that law and puts it in his heart, and hides it there as a precious treasure, a holy deposit, a good possession! Rebellion is dishonor to God, obedience is honor to God; trampling under foot his law is treating him with contempt, hiding it in our hearts is treating it with reverence; to dare to transgress that law is to insult the Giver, whilst to delight in obeying it is to bring glory to him who gave it.

It is, further, opposed to *unbelief*, that is, angry murmurs against him. Nothing dishonors God like doubting him. That murmuring word, that suspicious thought, that feeling of restlessness under God's dealings, are all indications of the mind that is dishonoring God. When Jonah said, "I do well to be angry," he dishonored God; when Jacob said, "All these things are against me," he dishonored God; when Job said, "My soul desireth strangling rather than life," he dishonored God. But when Eli said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" when David said, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" when Job said, "Blessed be God which taketh not away his favour from me," he "magnified the Lord." Unbelief dishonors him, but faith honors him.

It is opposed to *independence of God*—that rejects counsel and despises mercy. Instead of acknowledging him in everything, there are some persons who think they can do without God. They act as if he had nothing to do with them, and they had nothing to do with him. My hearers, God can do without you, for he is independent of us all, but you cannot do without God. Further: you cannot be independent of him; you cannot cut yourself off from him. You may cut yourself off from society, by becoming a hermit; you may cut yourself off from human friendship, by being unkind, and not shewing yourself friendly; you may cut yourself off from earthly comforts, by idleness, and dishonesty, and evil works; you may cut yourself off from life by bringing your days shortly to a close; but all things—all acts by which you may cut yourself off from everything else—does not disconnect you from your God. Dependence upon God is every man's state. Independent of God! The utterance of it proves ignorance and presumption, and will end in disappointment.

Lastly, it is opposed to *selfishness*, that would "sacrifice to its own net, and do incense to its own drag." He who is forgetful of God; he who rebels against God; he who thinks himself independent of God; he who is selfish,

and sacrifices to his own net, and does incense to his own drag; who lives for himself and to himself, and does not live to God, is not one of those who would join with the psalmist, when he said, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Further: you may discern what it is to "magnify the Lord," not only by looking at it in itself, not only by looking at it in its relation to that which is opposed to it, but also by *regarding the conduct of Christ*. My brethren, Christ looked up to his Father, and he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth;" that is, I have "magnified" thee before the world. Now mark the conduct of Christ in the aspect in which I view it.

He knew God. He said, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." He was the revealer of the Father; he came to declare the divine will, and unfold the divine purposes: he was ever contemplating, if I may so speak, God was always before him. The world did not know him, but Christ knew God; and hence he *ever* set before him the character of God. And then

He obeyed the law. He said, "Thy law is within my heart; I delight to do thy will, O my God;" "He magnified the law, and made it honorable;" He was "the end of the law for righteousness." "It became him to fulfil all righteousness." So perfect, and so complete, and so entire was Christ's obedience to the law, that he could look up to the Father and say, "I have finished the work, I have glorified thee on the earth." The whole law of God in all its precepts, in all its requirements, in all its diversity of demands was carried out by Christ. Hence Dr. Watts says—

"But in thy life the law appears,
Drawn out in living characters."

He acquiesced in the divine will. Is that connected with magnifying the Lord? What said Christ? "My meat and my drink is to do the will of my Father." "I came not, (said he,) to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." It is sometimes easier to *do* God's will than to *suffer* it. But Christ did both; and he said, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Oh, the *acquiescence*! not the *submission*; that word does not express Christ's conduct. Oh, the acquiescence of Christ in everything connected with the will of his Father! His own will entirely absorbed in his! That was "magnifying the Lord."

He sought him as the source of all supplies. He told his disciples that "without Him (that is, without his Father) he could do nothing." He never received a blessing without gratitude; he never went forth to his work without prayer. Gratitude and devotion made up the Saviour's inward life in relation to his Father. Two words express this entire dependence of Christ upon God, "Father I thank thee—Father I praise thee." And then

He pleased not himself. There was no selfishness in Christ; he did not, like those we have been referring to, "sacrifice to his own net, and do incense to his own drag." "Lo!" said he; and he fulfilled it; "I come to do thy will." The Saviour knew that the will of God was the salvation of your souls; that in the accomplishment of your salvation, he would have to take your nature;

he would have to endure ignominy and shame, ingratitude and persecution living, he would have to endure the death of the cross. All these things were before his mind. He was not necessitated to come and die for you, but he said, "I come to do thy will, O my God." He told his fierce and impious murderers, "Thou hast no power against me; I have power to lay down my life, I have power to take it again." Which of you would die, if you had power over your life? I don't ask you, which of you would die the death of the cross? You are not called to that death. But where is the moment, however distant you may look forward, that you would ascend your chamber and place yourself upon your bed of death, if you had power over your life? Christ had that power. He says, "I lay it down of myself; I take it again." There is no selfishness in Christ. We sometimes sing—

"Be thou my pattern—make me bear
More of thy gracious image here."

"Lord, shall thy bright example shine
In vain before mine eyes!"

Make me bear more of thy image. This is "magnifying the Lord." Do we desire to be like him? David then calls upon us this morning, and says, "O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

My brethren, let this great purpose, then, be the purpose of our existence. If it be not, our life will be a blank, a mistake, a failure, a deception, an error. Live *for* anything else but for God, live *to* anything else but to God, and you do not answer *THE* purpose of your existence. There are many *subordinate* objects to be accomplished in life, and they have all relation to time and character. But there is one *supreme* object to be accomplished by us, and that in relation to God and to eternity. You will soon have done with earth, but you will never have done with God. Death will cut you off from the world, but the moment after death you will "fall into the hands of the living God." Death will separate your body and soul, but the spirit will return to God who gave it. Death will cut you off from human society, but it will bring you into closer connexion with the divine intelligence.

Oh, my hearers! why do you live? What is the great purpose of your being? Live *to* God, live *for* God, live *on* God, live *with* God—that is true life; that is real being; that is the *essence* of existence. It will prepare you to live here—it will meeten you to live hereafter. Everything else will be essential unfitness for this life; essential unfitness for the life to come. "Magnify the Lord:" that is life really, life truly, life essentially, and it will be life eternally. "Oh!" says David—and I would utter his sentiment—"magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Had my time permitted, I would have shewn you by illustration how men have been influenced in this respect—what a difference it has made in the life and in the end of the man who has "magnified the Lord," and the man who has dishonoured him. I would take you to Moses, and contrast him with Pharaoh; I would take you to Saul, and contrast him with Samuel; I would take you to Daniel, and contrast him with Nebuchadnezzar; I will now only point

you to Belshazzar, and contrast him with Paul. I would do that, because in connexion with Belshazzar's end it is said, "And God in whose hands thy breath is, thou hast not glorified;" and because Paul said, that "he accounted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." If ever a man glorified God, it was Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. He acted upon the great and comprehensive principle of action which he himself laid down—"Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Let the rich man glory in his riches, and the mighty man glory in his strength, we will glory in the Lord. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But if a man sought to magnify anything else but God, that expression of Paul is applicable—"Your glorying is not good." There is Belshazzar in the palace, and Paul in prison: there sits the monarch, surrounded by magnificence, and there is Paul, enveloped in darkness. The monarch has his cups and his courtiers, but Paul has the chain and the cell. The one is surrounded by luxury, the other sitting in loneliness; the one is possessed of every comfort that can make life happy, temporally considered, and the other deprived of every earthly comfort that can sweeten existence. There sits the monarch trembling—there sits Paul rejoicing. The monarch looks, the apostle writes; the monarch sees the wall and the mystic sentence, he trembles, he understands its signification—a wretched man amid all his luxuries. The apostle sits; he has heard his sentence—he knows his doom—a happy man amidst it all. In that night miserable Belshazzar was slain; and in that day that the apostle awaited his martyrdom, he said, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me in that day."

Brethren, which would you rather be—Belshazzar in the palace, or Paul in prison?—the monarch rioting with his courtiers in luxury, or Paul sitting alone in darkness? Which would you rather be—Belshazzar, in agony, trembling, reading the sentence that proclaims his doom, or Paul, with joy and confidence writing an epistle that declares his approaching martyrdom? Do you say, give me the calmness of Paul before the terror of Belshazzar? That is what you ought to do! Belshazzar did not glorify that God in whose hands his breath was; Paul glorified God, and felt in the prospect of his martyrdom he was going to enjoy him for ever. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

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ATHEISM: OR IS THERE A DIVINE BEING, THE AUTHOR AND
RULER OF ALL THINGS?

A Sermon

BY THE REV. J. C. GALLAWAY, A. M.

DELIVERED

AT BISHOPSGATE CHAPEL, JANUARY 18, 1852.

“The fool hath said in his heart—no God.”—PSALM xiv. 1.

THE scepticism of the present day is rapidly verging into bold and absolute atheism. As the line that once clearly distinguished the Socinian from the deist is becoming less and less distinct; so is the separation of the deist from the atheist becoming less traceable, and less acknowledged. The denial of the truth of the scriptures is tending to the denial of the existence of God. The earnestness of the deist is giving way to the earnestness of the Pantheist; and the difference between the man who calls all things God, and the man who says there is no God at all, is a difference in word, but not in meaning. Priestism, Bible-theism, atheism, are the three great distinctions in theological sentiment, that promise to absorb all others; under the banner of one of which all men are gradually enrolling themselves. Men who adhere to the first, will implicitly bow to human tradition, and human authority in religious things. Men who adhere to the second, will devoutly acknowledge one true and living God, who has revealed himself in nature, in providence, and in the Bible. Men who adhere to the third will theoretically deny, and practically disregard all divine existence, and all spiritual allegiance. Between the extremes of priestism and atheism, there is a secret affinity which will probably become growingly apparent in the merging of the former into the latter; and then the great theological conflict of our world will be between the believers in the God of nature and the Bible, and the believers in no God at all.

I purpose on the present occasion, waving all reference to the errors and evils of priestism, and directing your attention to the subject of atheism. The question that I purpose submitting to your attention is the following: Is there a divine Being, the author and ruler of all things?

I need scarcely say that such a question is deserving the careful and earnest attention of all men. It is due to the claims of humanity to inquire diligently into the fact of the existence of God. As a question of philosophy, of order, of morality, of progressive civilization, of universal brotherhood—as a question that most intimately affects the secret springs of action in every human heart—as a question that has so much to do with human sorrows, and human joys, with our instinctive hopes and fears, and loves and hatreds—it is evidently one of the very first importance, and one, take whatever solution we may, that must exert a very wide and powerful influence over all the present interests of mankind. The man that will not enquire diligently and patiently into the truth of this great question, must be allowed by his fellow-men to do so; but refusing

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to look most carefully into such a subject, he must incur the penalty of forfeiting all respect for either strength of intellect, or benevolence of heart. Indifference to such a question, is treason to humanity ; and the man that can shew such a want of respect for himself or his fellow-men, must not complain, if they in return shew no respect for him. The man who can laugh at such a question, and deride the intellects that have worked out the conclusion that such a being as God really exists, must be allowed to laugh till other influences than argument turn that laugh into decent seriousness. The atheist has reached a conclusion so dark and cheerless, so cold and chilling, so uninstinctive and anti-human, that of all reasoners he ought to be the most distrustful of the essential truthfulness of his views. No one should more eagerly and with a mind more open to further information, examine the chart that he is following, or sound again and again the depths of the unknown sea into which he has pushed his adventurous bark. It can be no gain, no credit, no joy, to believe in a cold and dreary negation, to trace his own origin, and that of the visible universe to nothing ! Let him then of all men be the most earnest in his enquiries, and the most open to all the utterances of truth ; for he of all men is the most interested in escaping from the conclusions to which his former reasoning or his reckless disregard of all reasoning has led him.

To the theist this enquiry cannot be less interesting, or less momentous. However soothing or inspiring your faith in the divine existence, still that must be an unhealthy, and in the end an injurious faith, if it be untrue. You cannot really and ultimately gain by believing a lie. It becomes you, then, for your own sake, and for your true position in the varied scale of humanity, to be quite sure, on clear and sound evidence, that your theism is true ; and that in all your devout acknowledgments of a great and good Creator, you are paying homage not to an invention of your own fancy, a creature of your own choice, but to a blessed and glorious reality. Rest assured that truth will never suffer from careful and rigid enquiry. It craves the light and never gains such a strong and healthy influence over the mind, as when it has been introduced by a careful examination of its own credentials.

To the atheist and the theist—the unbeliever in God, and the believer, I make my common appeal. I invite you both to the same enquiry. Let us sit down on the same form, examine the same evidence and decide. The real question that we have to investigate, the nature of the evidence that will fairly avail, and the character of the conclusion which such evidence requires, are all points which it becomes us accurately to understand, and mutually to admit, at the onset of this vitally important inquiry.

The question to be determined is—is there a Being, who is the author and governor of all things ? Some say visible nature is all they recognise ; others, that all things existing constitute God. These views, and all kindred to them, we call by one name—Atheism. They do not recognise a personal God—a Being who knows, wills, loves, creates, governs—a Being omniscient, almighty, and everlasting.

Then let us accurately understand the kind and range of evidence that is admissible in an enquiry of this order. There are, as you know, different kinds of evidence, the employment of which, in any given instance, is to be determined by the nature of the question to be answered. There is demonstrative evidence, and moral evidence. The proper field of demonstration is mathematical science. This science starts with self-evident axioms, and reaches the conclusions that are virtually involved in such first and incontrovertible principles. Its legitimate conclusions are therefore inevitable. The opposites to them are absurdities or contradictions. Its proofs are demonstrations.

This is a kind of proof that is not applicable to questions of *fact*. To establish a fact we never resort to an abstract, self-evident principle. We appeal to our own consciousness—we use our own senses—we listen to testimony ; and thus we arrive at certain conclusions. The conclusion may be quite satisfactory ;

it may be quite sufficient for all practical purposes—still the conclusion that we reach is not demonstration; the opposite to it would not be an absurdity. The evidence that we employ in such cases, is called moral evidence.

Attempts have been made to prove the divine existence by the former of the two kinds of evidence which I have thus explained. It is not my intention to resort to that kind of proof on the present occasion. It is too abstract—and its admissibility in the case before us may be questioned. I purpose taking up the fact of the divine existence, as I should take up any other fact, and proceeding by a similar mode of enquiry, and employing a similar kind of evidence.

I need scarcely say that the course we shall have to take is to begin with some fact or facts that are made evident to us by consciousness, or our own senses or testimony, and then proceeding from what is thus made evident to us, to the great conclusion: that there is, or is not a God.

In this enquiry we cannot, it is obvious, avail ourselves of the divine authority of the Scriptures. To attempt to prove the existence of God, by quoting from the Bible, as the word of God, is of course, to beg the very question in dispute, and really to employ no argument at all. It is moreover, evident that the Bible was not written for the purpose of proving that there is a God; but of revealing the will of God. It is rendering no honor to his word to use it for a purpose for which it was never given. God, we believe, had proved his existence many, many centuries before the first books of the Bible were composed. This proof did not consist of words, but of deeds. Faith in that fact having been awakened by facts, then revelation we believe, was superadded to supplement the evidence and the disclosures of nature.

To nature then—meaning by that term all things, (except the works of man,) that come within the range of our consciousness and sense—we make our appeal. We expect not an answer that will solve all questions, remove all doubts, explain all mysteries. We anticipate no other kind of answer to our question respecting the divine existence, than we receive from similar sources in respect to human existence. Man, with all our knowledge and faith concerning him, is still a great mystery to us. The globe itself, with all the evidence of its existence, is still a mystery to us. Nature itself, in all her brilliancy and beauty, is still a mystery to us. So do we expect God will still seem to us, whatever the evidences of His being, and His attributes that may come before us in the course of our enquiries. Probability—high probability—is after all, all that we expect to reach in an investigation of this kind. We leave the atheist to prove, to demonstrate, if he can, that there is no God.

Our rigid deference to the laws of evidence—our full consciousness of the limit of our powers, will allow us to anticipate no other a conclusion than this—admitting the unfathomable depth and mystery of the Divine existence, still the evidence of such existence is, on the whole, so clear and ample, that our reason is far better satisfied in receiving a fact which it cannot explain, than in rejecting the evidence which it cannot deny.

By what steps does our reason conduct us to this conclusion? I begin with the fact of your own personality. Man, thou art. Each of you is a person. Each of you thinks, wills, loves, acts. Each of you knows the fact of your own personality—knows it by consciousness. You may easily puzzle yourselves, and perplex others, by many questions respecting this personality; but no sophistry can destroy the fact, or enable you to elude its sufficient evidence. Whatever you may think, or hear, or say upon the subject, yet there is no assertion which each one of you is able to make, with a clearer and stronger assurance of its truthfulness than this—I know that I am. This is an utterance that comes not from one heart, but from all hearts. It has been the utterance of all conscious human beings through all time. The evidence then of *human* personality is as clear and as abundant as reason can require. I do not suppose that any of you deny it; though some metaphysical speculations have favoured such denial. It is important in itself, and very important in

relation to the question that is under consideration to-night, for each of you to look into this matter, to listen to the voice within you, and to realize the self-proved fact expressed in the words, I am. Personality, then, is a fact—a fact of which there are millions of millions of instances.

Then a *personal* God is possible. Nay, these numberless instances of human personality render the fact of Divine personality highly probable. I have mind—I am mind. This body is mine. It is not I. I? Can these lips utter that word? What means it? I? Can you utter it? Can all men utter it? Then why not another than man utter it? Why not another intelligent being exist besides man? Why may not that person be higher than man—too high for man to measure? Is personality necessarily confined to one order of attributes? If it exist in connection with finite attributes, may it not exist in connexion with infinite? Seeing that there is a human personality, whose whole nature and faculties are, after all, not quite comprehensible by man himself—may there not be, is it not reasonable to suppose that there is, a Divine personality whose nature and attributes are even more unstarchable by man?

Nor let it be forgotten that this human personality which, by analogy, renders the Divine personality possible and probable, is not, strictly speaking, obvious to our senses. The pronouns, I, thou, he, which we so frequently employ, are not applied to our *corporeal* nature. We mean something *invisible* when we say, “I am.” We believe that if this body were taken away, and buried in yonder tomb, and there allowed so to moulder as to become not distinguishable from its parent clay, even then it will be possible for each of us to say, without feeling that we have lost any essential part of our personal identity—“I am.” Prone to feed on fancies, as intense affection sometimes is, yet what mother’s heart, or what widow’s heart ever thought that the dead body of her first-born, or of her first love, was the child, or the husband, that its warmest emotions still embraced. We do commonly say—(but I confess I never hear the expression without a shudder,)—“the child is buried—the husband is buried—they have buried Mr.——.” No, it is not so. The drapery is wrapt up and laid aside in the tomb—but the spirit—the man—the person is not there.

The atheist, I know, may not admit all this; but the atheist, let him give what explanation of mind or personality he may—let him deny its immateriality, and maintain that it consists only of a certain modification of corporeal atoms—still (without going into that question, without shewing, as I think I could, that either the materialist does not understand what he says, or virtually believes the same thing that we do,) still that mind—that personality which the atheist knows he himself is, and all other men are, is not visible. The inner nature—call it what you please—which enables you to say, “I give you *my hand*”—“I lay *my body* down to sleep”—that person, within the body, which determines its every day movements, is invisible. You cannot see it, taste it, feel it; yet it *is*. As with the human person, so with the Divine. We cannot see either. The invisibility of the human mind is to us no disproof of its existence. Neither let the invisibility of God be any disproof of his being. Invisibility is an appendage of mind; and taken in connection with other facts, should rather be an evidence that there is a personal God.

The second argument that we advance in favour of the divine existence, is based upon the universal, and we think, unalterable habit of tracing works of a certain character to mind, as the author. We and all men are perpetually meeting with objects which we never hesitate to trace to mind. Among these objects are many that we did not see wrought into their present form by human hands; nor have we seen works of a similar nature in any process of manufacture; nor can we furnish any satisfactory explanation of the process of their formation, or in some instances, of their design and use. Still, notwithstanding these disadvantages, we are at no loss to determine in respect to the general range of objects to which I allude—that they are fruits of mental skill—that

they are the works of man. Whatever the various degrees of knowledge which the spectators of such works may possess—whatever their theological sentiments, whether believing in no God, or in one God, or in many gods—still in reference to an endless variety of curious, useful, beautiful objects that attract our eye, our ear, our touch, our taste, there is not a vestige of doubt, or a shade of difference of opinion, among all classes, and all ages, in respect to the intelligent authorship of such works. It is recorded in the account of a certain voyage of discovery, that on visiting an uninhabited island the crew picked up a pewter spoon, on which the word “London” was engraved. The narrator of the scene describes in vivid language the excitement which that simple discovery produced. What awakened that excitement? The evidence that a mind had been there—that man had been there. They knew that such an object as that could not have been made, or found its way thither, without the agency of man.

We have been recently informed in the public prints, that some of the noble adventurers who hazarded their lives in search of Sir John Franklin, reached a spot where three mounds were erected, indicative of three graves, where a sign-post stood, bearing on the horizontal board the figure of a hand, and beneath which lay an empty cask, and a torn piece of rope. The convictions in this case were one—the excitement, too, intense. Though none of the spectators saw the graves dug, or the post raised, yet all saw at once, that man had been there—that these were the works of mind. Were any of you to wander by the sea shore, and see a corked bottle floating on the wave, to wait till it had been thrown upon the beach, and then to open it, and find a piece of paper neatly folded, bearing marks or figures that you could not decipher, could you, or any one in similar circumstances, hesitate to ascribe such an object to some human being? Many are the fragments of columns, porticos, statues, theatres, palaces, temples, cities, that are scattered along the coast of Asia Minor, through Syria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. None living saw the craftsmen at work upon these blocks of stone; the means by which they were conveyed from their original quarries and placed in their present position, is still, in some cases, a mystery; and yet neither the Volneys, nor the Martineaus, nor any one, would hesitate, for one moment, in ascribing such works to express design, and to regard them as incontrovertible evidence of the existence and action of that personality that we call man.

It is enough for my purpose, to remind you that this conclusion is universal and inevitable. Whether it be that all men are led to it because these works at once suggest to the minds of the spectators the well known use of their own mental faculties when engaged in works which may bear some resemblance to those which have thus passed under their observation, I will not pause to inquire. Some explanation of this kind may be correct. All I wish you to understand and admit now, is that all men, without any exception whatever, and without any hesitation, attribute such works to mind. They trace a meaning in the work. They discover an adaptation to an end; and they say contrivance proves a contriver—the works of mind, prove the existence of mind.

We are now prepared for the third argument, which together with the two already stated, conduces to the conclusion that there is a God. We have seen that a divine personality is not only possible, but probable; we have seen that the human mind invariably attributes certain productions that are met with in this world to a personal authorship, and does so on the ground of the indications of design in the things themselves; it now remains for me to direct your attention to that immense range of objects composing the visible universe; but not included in that class of productions which we universally attribute to the skill of man. In the field of observation, that lies beyond the workmanship of men, we discover traces of design as clearly marked, as in the class of fabrications already considered. The indications of a superintending mind are as apparent in the wider range as in the smaller. If the construction of the things them-

selves, independently of any actual observation of the manufacturing process, is a satisfactory evidence of design, in respect to that class of objects which constitute a comparatively little portion of the phenomena of the universe, the same evidence is equally conclusive in evincing the work of design in respect to the universe in general, in which traces of intention are as numerous and distinct as the objects themselves. The difference lies not in the nature of the evidence, but in its degree and completeness. If it is of any force in the first instance, it is entitled to still greater respect in the second. The same process of reasoning that leads all men to the conclusion that man has been at work in the one case, conducts us to the inference that not only mind, but a greater mind than man's, has been at work in the other. It is the greatest inconsistency imaginable, to admit the operation of mind in respect to the little and the imperfect, and to deny its action in respect to the vast and the complete. The action of mind is rationally undeniable. Many minds or one? All in nature that serves to prove the action of mind, equally proves that that mind is one. There is in nature not only design, but that design is one—such a unity, that nothing can explain it, but the presiding influence of the supreme intelligence. The mind—the one all-ruling mind which is thus indicated by the phenomena of the visible universe, we devoutly acknowledge as God. Need I enter into any particulars in confirmation of the statement that the visible universe—understanding by that word all objects that affect our senses, except those which we trace to a human authorship, abounds with indications of one superintending mind? Need I ask you to retrace paths which I would fain hope most of you have again and again trodden, in devout contemplation of the existence and attributes of a personal God? A few allusions to this vast contrivance may be interesting, however familiar to many.

Let us begin our rapid glance by looking at the world itself which we inhabit. Think of its form—a globe. Its rotundity is just adapted to its daily rotation, and its annual course. By these two regular motions the earth has its nights and days, and its change of seasons; and we the inhabitants have our time to work, and time to rest, and enjoy that variety of life, and that supply of food, which are suited to our nature. The crust of the earth abounds with various strata, each of which is fitted for the use and well being of man. Its clay, its coal formations, its metallic ores, its rocks, its various soils, all yield their appropriate and invaluable returns to the industry and to the wants of the human race. This globe, thus constructed, is girded with an atmospheric belt, so light, that we can move in it without impediment; so transparent, that the rays of light pass through it without resistance, and distant objects are discernible without confusion; so compact, and yet so flexible, that the slightest movement produces wide-spread vibrations, which skill and taste can blend into sweetest melodies; so vital, that to pollute it is to produce disease, to withdraw it is to inflict instantaneous death, to inhale it, in its freshness, is health and prolonged life. A medium, so wonderfully adapted to receive and transmit the rays of light, is not left without such illumination. From the sun and its planets, from the moon and the fixed stars, this necessary radiance comes, and comes with a rapidity that almost equals the quickness of thought. This light cheers, animates, and fructifies, while it throws over the face of the earth and the heavens, hues and tints of richest beauty. The earth itself, so wonderful in its construction, so impregnated with atmospheric influence, so illumined, is clothed with every variety of vegetable life. Between the smallest specimens, which it requires powerful artificial aid to discover or analyze, and the wide-spread banian tree, under the branches of one of which it is said that seven thousand men have found shelter, what various products are found! How curiously constructed, how adapted to the soil and climate in which they grow, how fragrant, how lovely, how regular and abundant in their delicious and nutritious fruits! The nearest imitations of these productions in the form of wax, or linen, or feathers, or shells, we never gaze upon without acknowledging

and admiring the taste and skill that wrought them. Yet how far short of the original is the best copy! And are we constrained to admit the action of mind in the imitation, and deny its necessity in the living, growing, perfect original?

But pass from vegetable to animal life. Explore, as far as you can, the wonders of the watery element. The seas and rivers, vast and measureless as they are, are instinct with animal existence. What varieties! How adapted to the dense element in which they live and sport! The shape of the fish in its relation to the medium through which it has to pass—the position, the shape, the structure, and the strength of the various fins—can anything prove design, if such adaptations do not? If the waters abound with living contrivances, is the air less rich in manifestations of a creating mind? From the minutest insect that commences and ends its life within the brief compass of a single day, through all the species of the feathered tribes, what variety again presents itself to our notice! When we listen to their voices, gaze upon their plumage, observe their habits, study their uses, and examine the structure of their feathers, bones, muscles, claws, beaks, eyes, ears, is it possible to escape the impression that such adaptations of means to ends originated in thought, are the works of mind? The earth has its appropriate inhabitants as well as the waters and the air. Pass by all others, and gaze upon man, the noblest of the whole. In respect to our corporeal nature the acknowledgment of the Psalmist is one which is never repeated without awakening a hearty response—"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The erectness of the body, the strength and flexibility of the skeleton frame to which the muscles are attached, the various strength and uses of those muscles, the arterial and venous system, the brain and its ramifying nerves, the limbs, the hands and feet, the countenance of the human being—what works, what wonders are thus presented to our contemplation! Take the five senses and their different organs, and what discoveries of design will you make! The sense of feeling—a befitting watchman to announce the commencement of disease, or the approach of danger, pervades, as it should, the whole body. Taste and smell are necessary as tests of the wholesomeness of food: their organs are placed where they can best answer this end. A sense of hearing is necessary to apprise man of the approach of danger, to enable him to enjoy free intercourse with his fellow men, and appreciate the charms of music. The sense of hearing secures to him these great benefits—and who that has paid the least attention to the structure of the human ear, the form and substance of the outer ear, the protection, the passages, the tympanum, the nicely balanced little bones attached to that perfect drum, and the connection of the whole, by nerves, with the brain and the organ of speech—who that has done this has failed to acknowledge and admire the proofs of marvellous wisdom and care which such a structure indicates. And then the eye, the human eye, its position, its two-fold action, its bony shield, its lids, its transparent humours, its convex and concave form, its perfect looking glass, its connexion with the brain, its uses. How wonders crowd upon us as we advance! Still contemplate man after you have studied his physical structure; reflect upon the mind that is within him—mind vigorous enough to apprehend and appreciate many of the wonders of the visible universe, but not strong enough to originate them or to explain them fully, and then ask yourselves, is it possible that such indications of design as these could be if a superintending mind had not made them? Could phenomena so suggestive of thought have originated without thought? What awakens so much wondering thought in us, could it have begun without thought? Can the thought that gave rise to such indications of thought be anything short of the thought of God, *i. e.* of one mind, and that an infinite mind? Can man, who is in the habit of tracing numberless objects which he never saw made, and knows not how they were made, to the mind of a *finite* being, hesitate, without the grossest inconsistency, to trace other indications of thought which differ

from human contrivance only in their inimitable minuteness, their completeness, and incomprehensible greatness, to a mind so much higher than his own mind that he cannot measure its altitude, and hence calls it infinite, *i. e.* God?

Yes, thus we reason out the existence of God. The same works that prove his infinite intelligence equally prove his benevolence, his faithfulness, and his righteousness. The proofs of wise and good government are as clear as the proofs of creation. The continuance of the works that we have surveyed requires the same superintendence which was needed for their commencement. He that began must carry on. What proves the one proves the other; and hence we believe in a personal God, who is not only the Author but the Governor of all things.

Fellow men, such is our faith—a faith which needs further instruction and further confirmation than nature can give, but still a faith which is fully justified by facts that are open to universal observation, and the mode of reasoning which all men adopt. This faith is no modern invention, and no national or sectarian characteristic. It is the faith of all ages, of all countries, and of all tribes; it is the faith of the untutored barbarian, and of the profoundest sage; it is the faith that recognises among its devoted disciples the highest intellects of which our race can boast; it is the faith of the young and of the old, of the living and the dying; it is the faith of humanity.

Beware, then, ye who would strike out from such a stream and venture alone in the dark, deep, cheerless waters of atheism. Beware! think well of the plunge you take; be quite sure that you are wiser than your race; be quite sure that you have well sounded all other depths first—explored all other regions first—explained all other mysteries first. Be sure! for in some path which you have not trodden there may be lying some clear proof that there is a God. Do not, for your own sake, resort to the cold negation that there is no God, till driven to it by the unequivocal utterance of every voice which the universe can express—till you have gone and looked for yourself into all the hidden retreats and mighty depths of this world, of all worlds, of all space, of all duration. Till then be as modest as your knowledge is limited, and be much more disposed to believe that there is another mind greater than your own, than to assume the very omniscience yourself, which you are bold and strange enough to say does not and cannot exist. Yes, till you yourself have exercised the omniscience that you deny to another, be willing to think and act as all other men do. Make yourself one with your race. Be true to humanity by believing that there is a God.

And as this faith enters your heart inquire, “Is there not something due from me to that Being? His offspring—an hourly pensioner on his untiring and universal bounty, endowed with reason, conscience, will, affections, ought I not to have loved, honored, and obeyed him? Am I not guilty of ingratitude and rebellion? Am I then safe? Can I be forgiven?” Nature has antidotes. Providence speaks of the possibility of recovery. The Bible utters on this vital question the clearest response. The special mission of the Bible is to answer the inquiry of the conscience that discovers and feels that it has sinned against its Maker. Its proclamation to an ungodly world is, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else;” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool;” “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The Evangelical Pulpit.

AN EXHORTATION TO ABSOLUTE FAITH IN GOD.

A Sermon

BY THE REV. GEORGE CLAYTON.

(OF WALWORTH,)

DELIVERED

AT FINSBURY CHAPEL, SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1852,

Being the Twenty-sixth Anniversary.

“Be not faithless but believing.”—JOHN xx. 27.

THESE words were originally addressed by our Lord Jesus Christ, to Thomas, surnamed Didymus. He was distinguished by the obstinacy of his unbelief with regard to the fact of Christ's resurrection. Indeed, among the disciples, there seemed to be but little disposition to receive this grand and fundamental truth and fact upon which the whole fabric of our christianity rests. And we cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom, and goodness of God in that he has overruled the unbelief of the first disciples, in order to strengthen the faith of other disciples in every age of time. Had there been an over readiness to receive the report of Christ's resurrection, without due examination, without sifting the evidences of the fact, our faith would not have had so strong a basis as that which it now happily occupies. Thomas, however, seemed to be among the disciples, the most invincible of them all, as to the reception of this important fact, for he was heard to say, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Here you see he very unwisely, very censurably proposes a test of his faith of his own choosing, and determined that he would not believe the truth of our Lord's resurrection, unless he had himself the opportunity of seeing in his hands the print of the nails, and putting his very finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into the scar which was made in his side, when one of the soldiers pierced him with a spear, “and forthwith came there out blood and water.”

“After eight days,” from the period of this declaration, when the disciples were gathered together and Thomas with them, “came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.” Instead of upbraiding Thomas, as he justly might have done for his unbelief—instead of treating him with the scorn and severity which his obstinate and determined

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resistance of the evidence already afforded might have merited, he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thine hand, and thrust it into my side; *be not faithless but believing.*"

This admonition and exhortation, this gracious and kind permission that our Lord afforded him to examine for himself, seemed completely to have vanquished him; "and Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God;" as if he had said, "Now I am fully convinced—not the shadow of a doubt remains upon my mind—and I worship him who is risen from the dead—my Lord, and my God."

Those who stand opposed to the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, finding it very difficult to elude the force of the testimony arising from the exclamation of Thomas, have said that he, having been taken very much on the surprise, broke out into this exclamation of astonishment—"my Lord and my God." As if he had said, "Is it possible that this is he who was nailed to the cross? I am entranced with wonder!" Now this is a very objectionable view of the passage, because it makes Thomas to "swear," and to "take the name of the Lord in vain." It may be very well for profane men, when they meet with anything that surprises them, to break out into the exclamation, "my Lord!" "my God!" But not so with Thomas one of the disciples of the Lord; and I beg you to mark that this is not a mere exclamation indicative of surprise; but that it was an act of adoration paid to Christ himself; for you must not overlook the expression. Thomas said unto *Him*, addressing himself directly to Christ, in a spirit of great seriousness, believing conviction, and true devotion: "I acknowledge thee the risen Saviour to be my Lord and my God." And this he might safely say, when all the angels of God are commanded to worship him, and when he receives the homage of all the holy and happy intelligencies of the heavenly state. They worship God and the Lamb.

Thus you see, the language of my text in its original application, "*Be not faithless, but believing.*" But it is quite obvious that this exhortation is applicable much more extensively, and to a great variety of subjects. It is highly important that we should have faith in God. It is noted as one of the indications or prognostics of the latter day, that many should depart from the faith. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" And we are living, my dear hearers, in a very faithless age, and at a period of the world when the great foundations of our faith are shaken to their very basis. I hold it, therefore, incumbent upon all who minister in sacred things, to guard the minds of their hearers, and especially of the young people committed to their charge, against the faithless character of the existing age. And hence it is, that on the 26th anniversary of the opening of this spacious place of worship in which God's presence has long resided, and God's Spirit has long acted upon the minds of multitudes, I thought it not an unsuitable topic of meditation to bring with me this evening, and to say to you all, the aged and the young, the rich and the poor, "*Be not faithless, but believing.*"

And I would apply this in the first place, to the being and perfections of God, and to the relation in which he stands to his creatures. "Ye believe," said our Lord to his disciples, "in God." But there are many in the present

day who deny, and who attempt to disprove—if it was possible to disprove—the existence of the Deity. It is an atheistical age; and from the rostrum of the lecturer, from the platform of the public assembly, and from the infidel press, unblushing attacks are made upon the primary principle, of the being of God. Now, it is by faith that we believe that God is; for we see him not: we cannot handle the Deity, as Thomas the humanity of our blessed Lord. “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” Is it not wonderful that in this age of the world, there should be those who profess to renounce their faith in the existence of the Eternal? They deny his personality upon the hypothesis of Pantheism. They tell us God is everywhere, and God is in every thing; that God is nature, and nature God. They confound the effect with the cause; and they take occasion from the fact of the divine immensity, and the Divine Omnipresence to deny God’s personality, as a distinct intelligence, a divine, original being. And as they deny his personality, so they deny his perfection; and they deny the relation in which he stands to his creatures, as their Creator, as their Ruler, as their Preserver, as their Benefactor, as their Saviour, as their Judge. With regard to these floating mischiefs which are abroad in society, let me say to you, “Be not faithless, but believing.” There is one God, even the Father; that God has a personal existence; that God has a three-fold personality, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: that God is clothed with all imaginable, and all possible perfection: that God stands related to you and you to him; you are his accountable creature, and are held responsible at his bar: and “everyone of us,” shall assuredly “give account of himself to God.”

II. I apply this to the *inspiration and authority of the holy Scriptures*. The faithlessness of man as to this great point requires no proof. There never was a day when the true nature of inspiration was so little understood and so little credited. Men tell us that the Bible is no further to be regarded than as it corresponds with the movements of our own understanding, the dictates of our own conscience, and the feelings which are natural to us as the creatures who are fallen. As to the *special* inspiration of Scripture it is a matter of scorn and derision. My dear hearers, all those who look candidly, and patiently go into an examination of the evidences of the inspiration and authority of the holy volume, will come to this conclusion, that they must do a much greater violence to their understanding and to their conscience to refuse that evidence than to accept it. The unbeliever must admit facts which are perfectly incredible, before he can successfully undermine the authenticity and the authority of the sacred volume. Now you are to believe that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;” that “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” and whoever may blaspheme its sacred pages, whoever may set at nought the authority of divine revelation, yet it still asserts its majesty and its supreme sway; and whatever is not found in the sacred writings is comparatively insignificant of worth; whatever is against the sacred writings is to be discarded as an abomination, and it remains for you to say—

“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treach’rous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

"Be not faithless but believing."

III. I apply this, thirdly, to the great promise of eternal life given to sinful man in Christ Jesus our Lord. The whole human race is in a state of moral and spiritual death, condemned by a righteous law, and in danger of final perdition; sleeping the sleep of death. The gospel comes to man with the promise of life; that life is in the Son of God—"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This record must be believed in order that we may attain to the life which it proclaims and offers. My hearer, whoever thou art, dost thou believe on the Son of God? Dost thou believe him to be God's eternal and co-equal Son? Dost thou believe him to be the appointed Mediator between God and man? Dost thou believe in the efficacy of his sacrifice, and in the power of his intercession? Without faith the message of reconciliation is rendered of non-effect. And having embraced that with an assured confidence it will bring to you the promise of life—"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—the life of justification by the power of God through the righteousness of the Surety—the life of regeneration by the power of the quickening Spirit—the life of the body by his resurrection from the tomb—and the life of the whole person ransomed from the grave, body and soul, re-united, and made for ever blessed in the enjoyment of God. My hearers, "be not faithless but believing." Rely upon this promise, accept it, apply it, and you will assuredly find that you "pass from death unto life."

I apply it, in the next place, to the unquestionable interest and care which God is pleased to take towards every individual in all the circumstances in which he may be placed, and in all the variety of conditions through which he may pass: in other words, "be not faithless but believing" as to the great doctrine of a *particular providence* in the affairs of men; that God has not abandoned our world to the guidance and plan of erring chance, but that he sits supreme upon his throne, marking every individual man, in whatever circumstances he may be found, and caring for that individual.

There is a common care of divine providence which is universal in its exercise; and there is a special care of divine providence towards those who are of "the household of faith." Now to realize this is of great importance. God looks down from heaven on the earth; he numbers the hairs of my head; he watches my steps; he appoints my lot; he deals out my afflictions as so many medicinal appliances for my soul's good; he hears my prayers; he has a book for my sighs, a bottle for my tears; he encompasseth my path, my lying down, and is acquainted with all my ways; whether I am stationary, or whether I move from place to place God is near me, God is with me, though I see not his shape, though I hear not his voice, though I am unconscious of any direct and visible mode of concurrence with him, yet I am surrounded by God; travel where I may I can never travel out of the hollow of his hand; he cares for the sparrows; he cares for me. "Be not faithless but believing."

I apply this, further, to the assured provision, defence, and preservation of all those who are the heirs of salvation. We pass from the doctrine of a general providence to the specific assurance which is given to every christian

man that God will provide for *him*. He sends the rain, he clothes the grass with its verdure, he gives to the lilies of the field their stateliness and beauty, and will he not care for you, oh ye of little faith? 'Tis the want of faith which leads us to indulge in those hard suspicions, those God-dishonouring fears, those distracting questions, those corroding cares which eat out the life of our comfort. "Be not faithless but believing." Bishop Hall says with his characteristic point and simplicity, "Did you ever see or hear of a father who fed his fowls and starved his children?" "Bread shall be given, water shall be sure;" "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you," for "godliness with contentment is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." You shall have all that is really good for you—all that your heavenly Father sees to be necessary. Rather than this should not be the case the windows of heaven should be opened, and shower down blessings upon you. He has ensured your preservation; you shall be kept by the mighty power of God, for "he keepeth the feet of his saints," kept from error, kept from outward transgression, kept from the seductions of an evil world, kept from the devices and snares of satan, "kept by the power of God *through faith*," mark you, "unto salvation." "Be not faithless but believing."

I apply this still farther to that lawful and laudable enterprise in which you are engaged, with a view to your own advantage, the advantage of others, and the more immediate glory of God. We are sent into the world, each one, to act his appropriate part. We therefore propose to ourselves a certain course of procedure. Upon that course, once settled, is called down the blessing of heaven; and I want you to feel that in this enterprise, whether undertaken with a view to your own lawful advantage, the advantage of those who stand connected with you, or in the service of God; with a view to the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the glory of the Most High, you may be sure, through faith, of adequate and ultimate success. Perhaps not successful commensurate with your wishes and hopes, because they may be too sanguine in expectation; but such a measure of success as God sees fitted for you, and such a measure of success as shall bring you to glorify his holy name, to acknowledge his blessing as resting upon your endeavour. Brethren, go forth in his strength, lay hold of the arm of Omnipotence, believe that the God who hath brought you hitherto, and who liveth among the children of men, will smile upon your undertaking, will bless your enterprise. I know that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." I know that "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain;" I know that; but I know that if I build and watch, in humble dependence upon God's aid, and God's promised blessing, I cannot ultimately fail of due success. "Be not faithless but believing."

Again, I apply this, beloved brethren, to the state of agitation and convulsion in which the world is placed at the present moment. Distraction, perplexity of nations, changes, "wars and rumours of wars," everywhere prevail. The Christian must have some sympathy with the world in which he dwells; and we are ready to say, when we contemplate the present aspects or auguries of society around us,

what shall the end of these things be? Alas! master what shall we do? Do? Wait—believe—pray. “Be not faithless.” Do not say, all these make against the prophecies of Scripture, or the promises of the gospel, or the cherished hopes of the disciples of Christ. By no means; for the walls of Jerusalem and the streets thereof, were built in troublous times. God moves in the whirlwind and in the storm. He maketh the winds his chariot, the clouds the dust of his feet. He is coming forth in a chariot filled with love, conquering and to conquer; and will bend every event, however hostile, into complete subserviency to his holy purpose, and to the accomplishment of his divine will. Realise his agency in all events; trace God in all the long concatenation of circumstances which history records. See how he has turned to his advantage all that has been distracting, and all that has been perplexing in the events of providence; for when “clouds and darkness are round about” him, “judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne.” Believe, only believe. Look at the bow bended on the dark cloud, and let that token assure your faith and strengthen your confidence; and assure yourself that all these things are working out the highest good, and to redound to the glory of his name. I see it not—you may say, I cannot decipher this from existing circumstances. No! but “we walk by faith, not by sight.” His way is in the sea—his path is in the deep waters—his footsteps are untractable. There he is. “Be not faithless, but believing.”

I apply this, briefly and lastly, to the universal triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ—to the supremacy of his religion throughout the whole earth. Brethren, we see not yet “all things put under him,” but we assuredly believe that the time is coming when he shall reign King over all the earth. We have the purpose of God, we have the promise of God, we have the partial fulfilment of the promise, we have the facts of history, we have the indications of the present age, all in favour of the fixed expectation of the kingdom of the Messiah in its universal establishment. There is a readiness in the minds of multitudes to receive the message—there is a willingness to hear it, to examine it, to test it; there is a disposition on the part of multitudes to adjure their prejudices, and superstitions, and false opinions. We read, in the journals of our missionaries, from far off lands, that the darkness is great, that the day is dawning, and it only requires more faith, more love, more zeal, more liberality, more effort, in order to hasten the realization of that blessed time when Jesus shall reign with undisputed sway, from the rivers to the ends of the earth, when all nations shall be tributary to him, and when they shall bring the riches and glory of all lands and place them at his feet with appropriate worship, and with adoring praise; saying, Now is come salvation and strength, and the power of our God, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” “Be not faithless, but believing.”

Let us, in conclusion, sincerely lament our want of faith. Into the best minds there will sometimes intrude, by the direction of the great enemy, atheistical impressions. Sometimes questions will arise, with regard to the inspiration of Holy Scripture; sometimes we are ready to question the truth of the promises of eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord; sometimes we are

ready to doubt, at least, in our own case, the care of a special providence over us and our interests; sometimes we are tempted to halt in our lawful and laudable enterprise, because we fear we shall be baffled, disconcerted, and disappointed; sometimes in the agony of depression, we look around upon the false professors, and are ready to say, "Ah! I shall lose the race, I shall never gain the prize, I shall fall like you!" No! if you are "kept by the power of God," you shall "endure to the end."

"More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Sometimes the agitated state of the world confounds us; sometimes we are ready to think that so great are the abounding evils of the age that Christianity is losing rather than gaining ground, and that the kingdom of the Messiah seems farther off than ever. No: these fears are all the fruits of unbelief: therefore let a remedy be applied, and whatever may be your temptations or exercise of mind, accept the message of Jesus Christ. Ground your faith upon God's unchangeable nature, God's immutable truth, and leave him to accomplish his own work in his own way, and you will find that everything conspires for your good, and for the good of the church and the world.

Let me infer from this subject the hateful character of unbelief. What is it? An attack upon God's veracity. There are many persons who wonder that so much stress should be laid upon this particular, by their teachers, and by the writers of those treatises which insist strenuously upon the necessity of faith. "We hear," say they, "so much about *faith*." Yes; and you cannot hear too much concerning it, because unbelief assaults the being of God, attacks the throne of God, and if it could attain its own object and purpose, it would drive it out of the world, and out of existence too. Have you very seriously weighed this matter—"He that believeth not, maketh God a liar?" He sets at nought the divine testimony. You know that if you have any ingenuous feeling; if you have a spark of moral rectitude, a man that would charge you with being a downright liar, perpetrates the greatest insult upon you which you could possibly receive. But what is it for man, a worm, an insect, an atom, to rise up in the face of man, to calling *God* a liar? And this is just what you are doing while you are cherishing and indulging unbelief. "Be not faithless."

Then a man may say, "How shall I accomplish this?—How comply with the exhortation of Christ?" Why, you must go to Christ for ability to comply; and if you are conscious of your deficiency in this great particular, go this very night to Him who is the "Author and the Finisher of faith." For faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Go to him and say, Lord, help my unbelief." Go to him and say, "Lord, increase my faith." Go to him and ask him that if you have real faith, though it be weak faith, that weak faith may be increased, and then you shall not stagger at the systems of unbelief; but "be strong in faith, giving glory to God." I can hope that faith will enter into the bosom of some unbelieving man, and some unconverted woman this night. God has said, "My word shall not return unto me void,

but it shall accomplish that which I please." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I therefore say to you in God's name, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" "By grace are ye saved through faith." Lord, give us this "precious faith;"—this faith which is by thy own operation—this faith which overcomes the world, which triumphs in the dying hour—which conducts the subjects of it to the pearly gates of paradise, and then only bids them adieu, "when faith is lost in vision, and hope in full fruition."

Lastly, remember, "that faith worketh by love." Did I hear any one say, "We have had a sermon upon *faith*, and we have heard nothing upon good works?" Why, good works are but the genuine fruit of a divine faith; therefore if you are found believing, you will be found acting for God; you will be found devoting your time, your substance, your all, to his honor and glory; you will look to that because it shews your faith. That is what I wish you to do this evening—to shew your faith by your works—by the fruit of genuine faith, in all liberality, generosity, and kindness towards the cause, and towards the people of the Redeemer. May God bless you abundantly, and your dear honored pastor, who for forty years has laboured among you; may he increase you more and more, you and your children; may he increase the fruits of your righteousness, and work in you the work of faith with power, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, to which consummate blessedness we look, through the merit and intercession of our great High Priest, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

" Oh, for a strong and lasting faith,
To credit what th' Almighty saith !
T' embrace the message of his Son,
And call the joys of heaven our own.

" Then should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls shall fear no more
Than solid rocks, when billows roar."

" Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the ruinable skies,
Where th' eternal Builder reigns,
And his own courts his power sustains."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

A Sermon

BY THE REV. W. S. EDWARDS,

DELIVERED

AT WEIGH HOUSE CHAPEL, (REV. T. BINNEY'S,) ON SUNDAY EVENING,
APRIL 18, 1852.

"The glorious gospel."—2 Cor. iv. 4.

THE mass of mankind are satisfied with that which is superficial, rather than that which is profound. And this is a failing of our nature from which innumerable and serious mistakes have extensively prevailed. It has imbued the mind with a false and pernicious estimate as to things in general, and conducted its reflections to the most erroneous decisions as to things of the greatest importance. That which is worthless has often been taken for that which is valuable; and that which is valuable has often been taken for that which is worthless. Scared from investigation by the task of research, men have been content for the most part, to grope their way amidst the darkness of unconscious error; deluded by the false appearances which have thickened so closely on their vision.

We have thrown out this fact as the illustration of another. What a vast difference of opinion, for instance, do you find existing in the world, as to the very object to which our brief text refers. Of all the schemes and theories which have ever been presented to the mind of man, there is not one to be found which has occasioned a greater variety of sentiment, or elicited a greater disparity of feeling than this: some treating it as unworthy of their notice or regard; and others valuing everything else, only in proportion as they find it identified with it. To some it is the object of contempt and of scorn; to others it is the object of delight and of pleasure. Some view it with indignant reproach; others with unbounded admiration. And this is a difference, the cause of which is to be traced to the influence of that unsubdued depravity, which wields its malignant energy in the heart of the one; and to the power of that divine grace which holds its empire in the bosom of the other, and by which the mind has become enlightened, and the understanding has become corrected.

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THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither doth he know them, but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

How very remarkable was the change thus effected on the mind of Paul. Once he was a Pharisee of the strictest sort, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; and educated in all the forms of the Jewish ritual. You find him not only attached to its rites and ceremonies, but the bitter and the uncompromising opponent and persecutor of all those who declined or relinquished their adherence to it. But now "brought out of darkness into marvellous light," the very object which he once hated he esteems above all price; and the very gospel which he once loaded with every sentiment and epithet of scornful contempt, he now regards and admires with the liveliest affection, with the warmest hope, with the profoundest admiration. So far from being "ashamed" of the gospel he gloried in it, he boasted of it, he accounted it transcendentally superior to all things else, he calls it "the glorious gospel."

The "*gospel*." What is it? It is that message of mercy and grace which God has made known to the world in the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The angel who proclaimed his birth has thus beautifully defined it—"Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." That the apostle was fully justified in regarding it as "glorious," no devout and sanctified mind can question for a moment. In fact, there is not one single feature, not one single aspect in which it can by possibility be viewed, which does not justify, nay, which does not demand the high and distinguished appellation. This is the fact which we propose this evening to illustrate and confirm. Let us bring to it, beloved, that devout and prayerful spirit which is so essential to a right apprehension of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Consider what we say, and may the Lord give you understanding.

I. Contemplate *the glory of its source*. With whom did this gospel originate? Not with man, but with God; not in the bosom of a seraph or an archangel, but in the mind of the Eternal. It was devised in the mysterious councils of the Holy Trinity, and it took its rise in the overflowing fulness of the infinite Godhead. In fact, it had in view a plan too vast, a purpose too mighty for the accomplishment of any created intelligence, however ennobled by genius, and however invested with power. Not all the wisdom of philosophers, not all the policy of statesmen, not all the profoundest researches of angelic legions, could have devised or developed so mighty and so grand a scheme. And had not God in pity to our race, revealed and made it known, not a ray of its light could have illumined our path, not a note of its melody could have gladdened our ears. Ere the gospel was published on our earth, for 4000 years had human nature been subjected to the practical application of every theory which could be devised to improve and ennoble its condition. While yet every species of discipline, every variety of culture, every scheme of political economy, every effort of philosophy, only served to augment those fearful necessities by which it was oppressed, and to thicken the shadows of guilt in which it was involved. Man's misery was so great, man's degradation was so rife, that no human wisdom, however comprehensive—no human might, however great—no human skill, however vast, or well applied—could arrest the

rising they portended, or alleviate the heavy sorrows they so grievously inflicted and whether man roamed amidst the hordes of savage barbarism, or dwelt amidst the marble palaces and monuments of classic and of civilised existence; he was everywhere the helpless victim of a potent and a pining want, whose cravings after something better, no earthly energy could meet, no earthly power could silence or remove.

Then came the gospel. Its arrival had been predicted by the Almighty in the garden of Eden, when all nature paused in breathless silence, shocked at man's transgression, expecting the dire infliction of the merited punishment. He descended to the earth, not armed with the thunderbolts of vengeance, but clad in the symbols of mercy, bearing the sceptre of hope—and then it was that he pronounced that great and precious promise, replete with mercy and with love: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" a promise reiterated in the sacrifices of ages that succeeded, and a promise which received its fulfilment, when in the fulness of time he sent forth his Son.

It is thus, then, that the Author of the "glorious gospel" is "the blessed God." And distinctly and beautifully does the word of God attest the fact. We are informed that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." We are informed that the gospel is the "wisdom of God and the power of God." We are informed that "God who is rich in mercy, in his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sin; hath quickened us, and raised us up, and given us to sit together in heavenly places with Jesus Christ;" and we are informed that he is the "Author of eternal salvation to them that believe." Yes, my brethren, it is "the glorious gospel of the blessed God;" the brightest emanations of the glory of Him who laid the foundations of the earth, and stretched out the curtain of the skies;—the glory of him who "holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing;"—the glory of him who "maketh the clouds his chariot;"—who launched the ponderous planets in their spheres, and who hung the brilliant sun in the heavens; and whom cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers adore, and worship with holy ecstasy and pleasure. Behold, then, this gospel in its glorious origin. It comes, enforced by paramount authority; it merits your warmest admiration, and well indeed does it justify the distinguished appellation by which the apostle has expressed it, when he describes it as "the glorious gospel."

II. *Contemplate the glory of its preparations.* We commonly infer the grandeur of a plan from the nature and extent of those arrangements which are ordinarily adopted for the purpose of securing its completion. Let us apply this criterion to the theme of our text; looking at those events by which the gospel was preceded, by which the world was prepared for its introduction. We behold a chain of preparatory elements and actions, rites and ceremonies, reaching from the creation of the globe, and converging from all quarters of the earth, and binding its final links to the cross of Christ as the common and universal centre. It was the grand design of the gospel to vindicate the honor of the Godhead, to harmonize the attributes of deity, to reconcile man to his

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offended Maker, to open a pathway to heaven for the inhabitants of earth, to spoil and defeat the principalities and powers of hell. Brethren, the design was pre-eminently vast, and the mighty apparatus which preceded its development was distinguished by a grandeur proportionately great. This earth on which we live was expressly formed to be the platform of its power; and for this the great Creator launched it into being, and placed it in its orbit on the highway of worlds. When the heavens were prepared, and a compass was set on the face of the deep, Christ was there, rejoicing over the habitable parts of the earth, and having his delights with the sons of men. Oh, yes; he formed the world of matter, for the one great purpose that the world of mind might be redeemed. And but for this, the globe on which we live would have been but as a solitary pebble dropped out of his hand into the depths of unfathomable space, and confined to the solitudes of changeless oblivion. All its majesty and grandeur, all its glory and beauty, all its sunlight and starlight, all its fruitfulness and verdure, all its laws and revolutions—all of these, were purposed, and ordained, that thus in the ages to come might “shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace.” He took the earth and hung it upon nothing, that his Son might be cradled and become incarnate in it; he clothed it with his bounty, lighted it up with his smiles, and with its beauty, that all its hills and its vallies might be vocal with the praises of redeeming grace.

And as creation was thus designed for the coming of this gospel, so also were all the arrangements and movements of providence expressly controlled and overruled for its approaching advent and publication on the earth. Even its bitterest foes became the unconscious instruments for advancing its progress. They were all, but the axe with which he hewed away the dark and towering battlements of satan's kingdom; kings held their sceptres, and monarchs were cast down from their thrones; heroes pushed the conquest far and near; nations were adjusted and established by equal laws and uniform advantages, or wrecked and scattered by civil anarchy and political convulsion, but just to usher in the illustrious reign of Him who was to be “the Prince of peace;” whose holy precepts were to calm and assuage the infuriated passions of mankind, and whose precious blood was to flow from the altar of his cross to wash away the guilt which dyed and stained the nations with its scarlet and its crimson sins. The military pomp of Xerxes, the triumphant marches of Darius, the victories of Alexander, the sweeping conquests of Roman legions, all of them, though they “meant not so,” neither did their hearts think so, were the unconscious instruments for advancing and preparing the world for the introduction of this “glorious gospel.”

And what was the whole Jewish economy but just the scaffolding which foreshadowed to the generations of mankind the grandeur of the finished and completed structure? For this were the hosts of Pharaoh engulfed in Egypt's dark sea; for this were the tribes of Israel led and fed as they wandered in the desert; for this was the ark placed on Sinai, amid the pomp of procession and the sound of music; for this the temple was reared in its magnificence and glory; for this the altar smoked with its blazing victims; and for this all the hosts of heaven watched in a holy ecstasy and pleasure, while every

fallen spirit of perdition fled in wild and terrified dismay, and the earnest expectations of the creature intensely waited for its coming.

Behold, then, this gospel in its vast and glorious preparation; and when you contemplate the stupendous process by which the world was ripened, and matured, for its illustrious appearing, must you not feel and acknowledge how just and true, and appropriate was the sentiment of Paul when he commended it to the reflection of all successive generations as "the glorious gospel?"

III. Contemplate *the glory of its manifestation*. Here it will be necessary to explain a little. It was by the actual appearance of Jesus Christ upon the earth that the gospel was visibly unfolded to man. And here it must be admitted that, according to the ordinary notions of human greatness and grandeur, there was nothing for the most part which was either adapted to excite human applause, or to win human admiration. Men had regarded things as "glorious" only in proportion as they were attended by outward pageantry and shew; and men estimated things as great only as they saw them in the pomp and circumstances of those kings and princes of the earth who moved amid the tented plains of the battle-field, greeted by the plaudits of military conquest, or who dwelt in palaces of marble enriched with the spoils of victorious campaigns, and who awarded at their pleasure the crowns and sceptres of inferior provinces and states. Now it is scarcely needful to remind you that no such glory as this had that Prince of the kings of the earth, by whom the gospel was revealed. He came in a poor and lowly state, and when he stood at the bar of Pilate he asserted plainly "My kingdom is not of this world." Nay, a common stable was his palace—disciples from the lowest grades of life were his only attendants—an insulting reed was put into his hand for a sceptre—a wreath of thorns was placed on his brow for a crown—and a cross of ignominious suffering was assigned to him in contempt for a throne. Here are facts, which, viewed apart and separate from others, present the gospel in its humblest form, and which make it, to the pride of the natural man, the object of scornful and bitter contempt. But hushed be the voice of reproach! The very humility which enshrouded the grandeur of his glorious errand was only *assumed* to accomplish the loftiest of purposes,—a purpose which nothing but the essential dignity of his nature could achieve and complete.

Brethren, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet *for our sakes* became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He came to arrest the progress of the curse, to remove the terrors of the law, to lift our prostrate spirits to the skies, to "make us kings and priests unto God and the Father;" and the very obscurity and meanness in which he lived on earth expressly served to shew the littleness of this world's grandeur and this world's greatness compared with blessings great and glorious like these.

And as his work was glorious in its nature, so also was that work accompanied in its every stage and step by glorious attestations of his dignity and his own illustrious commission. Ah! it is true he lay a little babe in the manger of Bethlehem, but a blazing world was launched in yonder heavens to light the Eastern magi to his feet. It is true he had not the honours of an

earthly sovereign to attend his person with its pomp and parade, but he moved from place to place followed by the crowds who hung in eager interest upon his lips, and who started with amazement at his wonder-working power! It is true he had not the incense of applause from the great and noble of the earth, like an earthly sovereign, but he loosened the tongue of the dumb to celebrate his praise, and poured the tide of health to make the leper and the lame rejoice together in his presence. It is true he had not the external shew and that power and dominion which was wielded by the emperors and monarchs of earth, but all the elements of nature were obedient to his voice. Sicknes and disease went at his bidding, and the winds were calmed at his word, and the graves disgorged their tenants at his call. It is true he had no stately palace skirted by Doric columns, and crowned by lofty and imposing domes, but the globe itself was his palace, the mountain summit was capped with splendour in his transfiguration to attest his dignity, and the boisterous waves were hardened into a solid pathway for his feet. And when he died he had not his sombre train of mourners, or a vast retinue of followers to grace his funeral procession, and rend their garments in token of their sorrow, but the earth split its bosom, the temple veil tore itself in twain, the sun veiled his disk, the earth was covered with darkness, the centurion attested his dignity, and the crowd who came to scoff smote on their breasts and went back to their dwelling in the very anguish of excitement and terror. Stand back, ye kings and princes, ye philosophers and heroes of the earth! Which of your proudest models can boast of greatness and glory such as this? He is the Lord of glory, the King of kings, heaven his throne, earth his footstool, light his garment, clouds his chariot, angelic hosts his retinue! He died, he rose, he ascended, and he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. He shivered the shrines of idolatry with the sceptre of mercy. He changed the crown of thorns for the jewelled diadem of universal empire; and thus shall he reign until he hath put all things under his feet, and diffused his glory from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

Behold, then, brethren the gospel in its glorious manifestation; and when you thus survey it, how can you be surprised that the apostle, fired with the glowing ardour of his theme should call it "the glorious gospel"

IV. Contemplate *the glory of its triumphs*. What other system has ever accomplished such conquests as this? In its purity and holiness it has forced and found its way into the innermost recesses of depravity and crime, expelling whatever opposed its reign. It has sit enthroned in absolute dominion, wielding its energy in unrestricted might and power. It met the thief on Mount Calvary, and it changed his spirit from a culprit into a king and priest unto God. It met Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, and it changed him from a bold blasphemer into a weeping suppliant before the cross of Christ. It met the stern goaler at Philippi, and it drew the cry from his afflicted heart, "What must I do to be saved?" It was preached on the day of Pentecost; and three thousand cried, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" And what has it not accomplished since? Why it has waded through seas of blood; walked through fires of martyrdom; pushed its conquest east and west, north and

south; braved the fury of princes; worn out the anger of despots; defeated the craft of priests; outstripped the schemes of philosophers; and risen in majesty and glory, demanding the admiration of the earth! Nations have vanished with the lapse of time; cities have become entombed in the soil on which they stood; kingdoms have been blotted from the map of being, with the progress of ages—but the glorious gospel has survived them all, wielding its colossal might and energy amid the wide waste of all things else, going to and fro in the earth, making the desert to rejoice and blossom like the rose. It went forth with the apostles to the regions of idolatry; it entered the temples and palaces; it shook the shrines of heathenism, overturned the altars of false and impious deities—and so it triumphed there! It went forth with Martin Luther, through the continent of Europe; it shook the nations from their slumber, roused the church from its lethargy, sounded the cry, “Justification by faith alone”—and so it triumphed there! It went forth through the British Isles; it made the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield the power of God to the salvation of thousands. It covered the land with sanctuaries and filled them with the worshippers of God in Christ—and so it triumphed there! It went forth with Moffat to the burning sands of Africa, and with Williams to the isles of the Southern Sea; and with Morrison to the spicy plains of China—and in many a blessed instance, it has gloriously triumphed there! And soon shall it achieve yet far more splendid victories; far more illustrious conquests. Nations shall cast their idols to the moles and bats; it shall go forth conquering and to conquer: the tidings of its joy shall roll on every plain, and resound through every forest; the dwellers on the hills and in the valleys shall shout to each other; and the mountain tops from the distant mountains catch the flying joy, till earth shall roll the rapturous hosanna round; and then shall be sung in the strains of universal melody, and answered in the music of the skies, the song of universal triumph, won and completed by “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”

Lastly—Contemplate *the glory of its purpose*. For what purpose has this gospel been given? and for what object is it published on the earth? Not, my hearers, merely to excite your curiosity, but to turn you from sin and Satan; not merely to win your applause, but to save your souls; not merely to call forth your praise, but to take those precious souls of yours, and nourish them up to everlasting life; to publish to you a Saviour—and this is just what you want: you cannot commend yourselves to God by any methods of your own. It is recorded in historic narrative of a poor heathen, who was toiling in a wearisome pilgrimage, with feet wounded and bleeding from the sharpened iron on which he trod, to propitiate his idol god; that when in the course of his journey, he heard a missionary preaching “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” he paused, and listened, and at length, with tearful eye, he said—“This is what I want; this is what I want!” He abandoned his pilgrimage, threw away the spikes that tortured him, and found the true propitiation for his guilt—

“A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than —”

any which he himself could offer; and so it must be with you. In vain you

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seek for peace with God by methods of your own ; it is the gospel which alone can bless and save you. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This is the grand purpose of the gospel. You are guilty, and the gospel brings you an atonement for your guilt ; you are condemned, and the gospel brings you a reprieve from your condemnation ; you are polluted, and the gospel brings you a fountain where you may wash, and be whiter than snow. Here is peace for the troubled conscience, hope for the agitated bosom, balm for the wounded spirit, acquittal for the trembling culprit, joy and heaven for the outcast sinner. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." No. All their sorrows melt and fade before "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Death is transformed into a messenger of mercy before "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Judgment is disarmed of all its terrors, and eternity of all its gloom, before "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Oh ! believe, believe the record true—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the great purpose of the gospel, and who sees not its grandeur and its excellence ?

Beloved, let us this evening, in the house of God, come to the altar and avow again our invincible, our immovable adherence to "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Woe to the British churches when the gospel loses its paramount place in them ! Yes ; when sorrow shall invade our dwelling, and death shall steal away, in gradual or sudden stroke, the desire of our eyes, we will calm our spirits with the abounding consolations of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." When we lie upon our dying couch, and the tide of life is ebbing out, and drifting our spirits from the shores of time, our last breath shall depart in the utterance of our gratitude for "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." When the earth and its works shall blaze together in the final conflagration, we will stand with a calm and undisturbed serenity placing our reliance for happiness and bliss on "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." When the times and seasons shall have run their course, and the globe shall be blotted from the highway of space, and swept from the map of being, we will gather to the palace of the King of kings, and swell the anthem of universal joy for "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

The Evangelical Pulpit.

THE EARTHLY AND THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

A Sermon

BY THE HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL,

DELIVERED

AT JOHN STREET CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
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"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." *Psa. lxxviii. 18.*

As the title of this Psalm indicates, it was composed by David; and, if you will look at 29th verse, you will see that it was written at the time when the temple, called the ark of God, was established at Jerusalem. "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee." And therefore it was not written in any period before David's reign; since the ark was not placed at mount Zion till then; and yet it was written before the separation of the ten tribes from the two, for in the 26th and 27th verses we read of "the congregations of the Lord." "There is little Benjamin, their ruler," (that is the ruler of the heathen,) "the princes of Judah, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali." Now those princes were not in the congregations of Jerusalem, after the separation of the ten tribes, it could not therefore be written in any reign subsequent to that of Solomon. But it was not written in Solomon's reign, nor by Solomon, because the whole of it is a celebration of recent victories, it was therefore obviously written as the title expresses, by David, after the close of some great victory, when the ark was brought to Jerusalem; and probably at the close of his greatest, and latest triumphs, when the royal city of Rabbah was taken, and the last place that held out against his dominions was subdued.

David, by the help of God, made rapid victories over each of the nations around him, that opposed his dominion. In the eighth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, you find a series of these victories related; the Philistines were totally subdued, who laid to the west and south of his dominions; Moab on the east was entirely subjugated; and in the second verse of this chapter we read, "the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts." The Syrians next were subdued; for we again read, in the sixth verse, that "the
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Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts." The Arabs next follow in the train of his victories, and in the fourteenth verse, (after another victory over the Syrians in which eighteen thousand of his enemies were slaughtered) it is said "he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants." To the south east, far into the wilderness, did the Arabs obey their conqueror. Still, amongst the powerful nations of the Syrians there were those that were unsubdued, and when the unprovoked insult from Hanun, accompanied with menacing appearances of invasion, induced David to assemble against them, we find in the tenth chapter of this book that his general Joab won a signal victory over the combined forces of the Syrians and of Ammon. David, as you read at the end of this chapter, won a yet more important victory, of his own, over the Syrians, and the result was, that the Syrian nations generally became David's servants. "And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer (19th verse,) saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them; so the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more." Two or three years of siege under the command of this brave and experienced general, Joab, subdued the Ammonites, and brought that capital to the point of a surrender, and then it was that David, at Joab's invitation, collected a large army and accomplished the entire subjugation, of that important nation. Thus were all his enemies subdued; Rabbah was taken—as we read at the close of Sam. xii—and David was henceforth free from all molestation from all his enemies round about. It was then, it appears, this beautiful Psalm was composed; when ascribing his victorious powers justly to God who had preserved him withersoever he went; he said, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him; as smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God." And then anticipating the result of this double fact—their military success, and the religious service that they exclusively rendered to Jehovah at Jerusalem, he said (29th verse,) "because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee." And anticipating with confidence the day when the manifestation of God's protecting power, and the results of religion among the people, should lead the tribes to associate themselves, from amongst the heathen nations to the people of the God of Israel; he says, "princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

In these circumstances it was that David, in this inspired hymn thus addressed the Almighty. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men: yea; for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

An examination of the language of Scripture, and the use of words in Scripture with reference to all these expressions, would lead me to a greater length in exposition of this passage than the time allotted for a sermon will admit, but those who will consider this subject, and in reading the Scriptures observe the language here used, will be guided, I think, to this conclusion, that when the Psalmist said, "thou hast ascended on high," he spoke

of God as a conqueror returning from his war to his own palace in heaven; ascending on high, not to mount Zion, which is never so spoken of, but to heaven, which is constantly so spoken of, according to the language of the prophet Isaiah, as well as in many other places. "I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The Lord had conquered his enemies by David, and was now returned to his glory, even as he had descended, by the manifestation of his power, towards his friends and foes. Next "thou hast led captivity captive." The constant use of the word "captivity" shews that it is not meant those who pay captive but prisoners. Thou hast led a prey captive, a body of captives captive. He had made his enemies his prisoners; that is by the feats of David and the Israelites, he had subdued all the leaders and princes, of those furious, and hostile nations. They all became subject to him, through the prowess of those armies to which he gave his general blessing. Thou hast led those prisoners captive.

In the next place the Psalmist celebrated the goodness of God to his people by saying, "Thou hast received gifts for men." The word literally is, *among men*; and whether the word "men" here refers to his enemies or to his people Israel, is of little moment, the sense is obvious whichever of these two interpretations is received. Probably he means among his people, "Thou hast received gifts among men," that is, among the Israelites. The gifts mentioned are those spoken of in verse 29, and in many other places of Scripture. "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee." In the eighth of Samuel, as well as in many other places, it is mentioned that these conquered nations brought gifts, that is, tribute to David. And if you look at the twenty-sixth chapter of the first book of Chronicles, you read of the use that was made of these gifts—"Shilometh and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host had dedicated; out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate *to maintain the house of the Lord.*" Jehovah, then, by David his servant, had received from all those conquered nations gifts for the building of his temple at Jerusalem, and the blessing of his favoured people. And finally, the Psalmist adds, "yea, for the rebellious also," because the effect of building the temple at Jerusalem, and of blessing his chosen people, would be, indirectly, but most extensively, the blessing of the conquered nations, as it would lead to an acquaintance with the truth and the service of the true God, and would make many of them at least, his friends and his servants. And

Lastly. The result of these gifts which were received from the conquered nations is expressed by our text, "yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Now where he would dwell is manifest by the context, for in the sixteenth verse it is said on mount Zion. "The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan." "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever." Many similar passages tell us that the Lord dwelt at Mount Zion. "In Salem was his dwelling place, and his habitation in mount Zion." "For

the Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation." It was there the Lord chose to dwell, because his Shechinah was the token of his presence, especially in that temple, and there he sought to be especially honoured by his people. The result, then, of the conquest of these nations and the erection of this temple to his honor would be that the Lord God should dwell on the hill of Zion among his people to bless them, and all those who became proselytes to true religion be fellow worshippers with his own people.

But while this is the obvious, or, as it seems to me, the obvious sense of the passage, the apostle Paul applies it, as you recollect probably, to a much higher good, and uses these words respecting it, in the fourth of Ephesians, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith (God saith, the Holy Spirit saith) When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So that he applies this directly to our Lord. "Wherefore he saith (the Holy Spirit saith) when he (God) ascended up on high he led a body of captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he (Jesus) ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ." It is to this that the inspired apostle applies the language and the texture of the whole psalm. The passage here he applies directly and in argument to the ascension of our Saviour and the gifts he has received for men. I view the principle upon which he so applies it, that it expresses, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a general truth, that God does not once, but many times, ascend on high for the blessing of his people upon his conquered enemies, leads his prisoners captives, receives gifts, not for himself, but "for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." What he did in David's day he did again and again afterwards successively in princes who served him, and more than all, and most of all, he did it in Jesus Christ, who was "God manifest in the flesh," and to whom they remarkably, and especially, and most accurately belong; for it received the spiritual prelusive accomplishment in their existence; its grand accomplishment was reserved for Christ. And accurately does the apostle Paul turn to the Saviour himself and say, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Now let us notice the exact analogy, or, at least the analogy which there is between these two illustrations of the same truth. As the Almighty, when he had, by his servant David, conquered the heathen nations around, did, as we read in another place, return to his place—for this is his language respecting his dwelling in heaven, "I will return to my place,"⁶ so did the Saviour, when he had accomplished the work given him to do, ascend up towards heaven. Many saw him, with their own eyes witnessed it, with their own lips professed, testified it to numbers that heard them. They saw him slowly ascending from

Mount Olivet, the very place where his blood had been shed for sinners, going to his rightful glory. Angels immediately bore witness to their Messiah and their Maker, and declared that he was gone up to heaven. The apostles immediately testified the same to those who could not contradict their testimony, and all revelations respecting the knowledge of that journey heavenwards, of which they could only, with the natural eye, see the early commencement, were now finished by Jesus rising to the throne of glory, to be at the right hand of his Father; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him. There he has reigned, and there he will reign till he comes again. Our Lord had come upon the earth for us; for us had the nails driven into his hands at Calvary; died in the presence of his disciples; ascended up to heaven; is there at this moment, and is there to reign; he is gone up, "God manifest in the flesh—God over all blessed for ever," that he might receive his own throne, and at length extend his dominion over this rebellious earth.

In the next place, as the Almighty God, then, had made his enemies in all the heathen nations around captive, so as to restrain their violence and defeat their machinations altogether, so the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished a more important defeat on behalf of his people. You recollect that it is stated that satan is "the prince of this world"—"the god of this world;" that "he worketh in the children of disobedience;" that he "takes men captive at his will;" that he "blinds their understanding;" he puts into the mind of one, as he did into that of Judas, to betray his Lord, and into the heart of another, as he did into the heart of Annanias, to lie against the Holy Ghost, and is now that powerful Being to whom the world bows down as its King. But that power was effectually undermined the day when Jesus, on the cross, wrought out our redemption, and when he ascended to glory, and did, as it were bind all those rebellious spirits to his chariot wheels, and triumphed over them on his cross, according to the apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Colossians—"Having spoiled principalities and powers he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross." He had announced this beforehand, when the whole amount of his suffering was before his prescience distinctly; then, he said with joy, "I beheld satan, like lightning fall from heaven." Again, his soul triumphed in the prospect, when just ere he entered on his agonizing scenes he said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out;" and then triumphed effectually over satan. And if the devil still works in the children of disobedience, and still prevails in this world, it is only in pursuance of this prediction of the Almighty, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." After awhile the wickedness of man, the ungrateful, obstinate perverseness of our corrupt hearts are to be changed, that the full blaze of divine goodness may shine before the whole universe, when at length this rebellious world shall be reclaimed to him. And the day is coming when satan shall be effectually and for ever subdued. Bound now by the chain of Divine decrees, and the omnipotent power of the Saviour, which he cannot resist, at a distant day to be laid hold of and shut up himself. We read in the Apocalypse that for a thousand years he is to torment and deceive the nations no longer, and ultimately to be entirely sub-

duced, according to that earliest, and one of the greatest of the promises made to satan himself by his Almighty Maker, "He shall bruise thy head." -And according to that revealed intention of the Almighty, he sent Jesus into the world; for this purpose was the Son of God manifest, that he might destroy the works of the devil fully and for ever. Meanwhile, in every instance, when any heart is changed from unbelief to faith; from ungodliness to the service of its Maker; and from wickedness to holiness, is he made victor over satan. The devil loses his power; and that mission given by our Lord to St. Paul, is accomplished in each one, "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Never let us forget how great a blessing the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out for us when he made those powerful foes of ours, against whom we could oppose no effectual resistance, submissive to his wish, and exercised his Divine authority over them and those whom they had made captive.

When, also, in the next place, our Lord accomplished this great deliverance that made our great and insidious enemy baffled in his end, and by death, "overcame him who had the power of death, that is the devil," then did Jesus, in the next place, "give gifts unto men." As God, by his servant David, received gifts for his people, and for the building especially of his temple at Jerusalem, so when the Lord Jesus had accomplished this victory over satan, did he also receive gifts in order to bestow them upon his people. The chief of these gifts is the gift of his own Spirit, who never would and never could have been bestowed upon any of the sons of men, except through him. When the Redeemer was about to depart, you remember that he informed his disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go away: adding, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." He could not come unless the atonement were made; he could not be bestowed on the enemies of God righteously, and in a manner worthy of his holy nature, unless first his law were satisfied and his government vindicated. "But if I depart," Jesus added, "I will send him unto you." The atonement accomplished he had a right, and he would exercise that right to bestow the Holy Spirit on as many as trusted in him, so that he could say with confidence, "If any man thirst, let him come to me," and then, if any man wishes, and would have his thirst for holiness, salvation, and glory satisfied, let him come to me and receive those gifts of the Holy Spirit which will accomplish all. This is the first and greatest gift which Jesus has received for men. But, it includes in it all others—pardon, wisdom, holiness, perseverance, and all other lesser blessings are involved in this; for when the Spirit of God brings a man to believe in Christ, then is he forgiven, adopted, sanctified, saved; and all other promises are yea, and amen to that man, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. All blessings for time and eternity are included, as the apostle tells us in the passage I have read; not only the grace which is given to each according to the gift of Christ, but all the means of grace too.—Apostles, through whom this revelation has come to us, the ordinary ministers of his Word, whose business it is to proclaim that revelation—all are parts of those gifts which Jesus Christ has received for his people. All needful blessings are treasured up for us in him; we have only to ask in his name, and have them.

Lastly, the design of these blessings is here stated:—"Thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among his people." As David, when these tributes and these gifts were bestowed for the erection of the temple at Jerusalem, secured, indirectly, a blessing to the rebellious—all those who had hitherto been opposed to God and his people; so, when the Lord Jesus received these gifts, it was not only for his own people, for he had no people gathered to him yet, but it was for the rebellious essentially, for those who over the whole world were rebellious against the authority of God, and disposed yet more to trample on the cause of the Redeemer; but "he received gifts for them." The Holy Spirit was

purchased and provided for all his elect; for those who at that time were ignorant and out of the way, he brought to the conviction of their ruined state by the Spirit given in that promise, "He shall convince the world of sin." Led to see that out of Christ they must perish; brought to a conviction of their true poverty, to seek to have the lowest place among his people; converted, by being drawn to believe in the gospel by the agency of the Spirit, and the force of divine truth, which he renders effectual—thus the rebellious are interested in the gifts which Jesus has received.

How many of you, brethren, have experienced this truth? And oh! if there are those rebellious still amongst us, that you may have those gifts which Christ has secured even for rebellious men. Go and have them, and be enriched also for time and eternity, with these boundless blessings which his generosity secures for his enemies—his opponents.

And now, the design of these blessings is expressed, finally, in these words—"Even for the rebellious also, *that the Lord God might dwell among them.*" The object for which the temple was to be constructed at Jerusalem, was that the Lord God might dwell there among his people. There are many passages expressing this, and amongst others that beautiful Psalm in which David expresses his earnest wish that the temple might rise—(Psalm xxiv.)—He was gathering enormous wealth for this purpose, and was ready to lay the foundation, and raise it to its roof; but God prohibited him after he had seen his wish and heard the sighing of his heart. It was reserved for Solomon to accomplish that for which David had made such vast preparations. But his whole heart earnestly desired to see God glorified thus; and thus did he express his wish for this result—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." He longed to see that temple rise, that building of his imagination, to which his wealth was so largely consecrated. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." For what purpose?—"And the King of glory shall come in." He longed for the temple to be reared, that God might dwell among his people; that there his people, when they gathered by thousands or by millions, might have the visible symbol of his presence—to know that the Lord was among them. He dwells in heaven, but he says also, "I dwell with him that is poor, and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." He could therefore make Jerusalem the scene of his immediate presence, while he filled heavens with his glory.

Now, in the same way, just as the temple of Jerusalem was built, that it might contain the presence of the Lord, and that his people might feel they had God among them, to their joy and their sanctification, so hath the Lord Jesus received gifts for men, that a nobler temple might be raised to the honor of Jehovah, that through those spiritual gifts, stone after living stone might be raised to construct this temple, raising by the power of divine grace in every part of this revolted world a temple of God's honor, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone;" "In whom," says the Apostle Paul, "ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." God was to dwell in that temple for ever; by no visible Shechinah, but by his own real presence, dwelling in the heart of every believer, and dwelling in the whole church. Has he not said to all his people, "Come out from among them?"—from all mine enemies—from the frivolous and earthly, from the sensual and profane—from the unbelieving and atheistical, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will dwell among you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." In the whole church, formed of his adopted children, God dwells as a father; in every local church in which there is "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," and in which the members are really his servants, he dwells as a father, surrounded by his sons and daughters; yea, in every heart God dwells, according to the Redeemer's promise, "if any man love me, and will keep my words, my father will love him, and *we will come to him, and*

make our abode with him." Thus he has received gifts, spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit himself, pardon, wisdom, holiness: the means of grace, and all other precious gifts. He has bestowed them on men, that the Lord God might dwell among them; yea, among the rebellious too. Oh, that we may ever experience richly, my brethren, the effects of our Saviour's work which we commemorate to day. He has ascended on high; let us follow him thither with joy; he has led his enemies captives, binding satan, and all his spiritual foes to his chariot wheels; he has received, and he has distributed gifts, precious and splendid, and innumerable, amongst his people. His riches are inexhaustible, he is yet as liberal as ever, waiting to be gracious, ready to bless every believing soul; and the result is that God dwells among us, as a father among his children, among the hidden, or the humble, the true, prayerful and obedient, well pleased, seeing the work of his own hand in every restored and reformed spirit, seeing the glorious work begun which is to be consummated in the absolute perfection of each throughout the realms of bliss—a glory which the shame of Jesus has wrought out, which his sorrow has secured for us; a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." May you and I be all partakers of these rich results of his redeeming love!

And now brethren let us love him who hath loved us, and look with joy upon his sacrifice, anticipate the consummation with increasing hope; let gratitude and joy mark our whole service, it must not be reluctant, it must not be gloomy; but with joy and love let us serve the Redeemer who is gone to his glory. And if we live in the exercise of faith amongst the millions that are faithless; still keeping him in holy remembrance amongst the millions that forget him, we shall at last awake up in his likeness, and he will welcome us with that glorious welcome that he has promised them that love his appearing.

If there are any here who have not this glorious hope, who feel they have no part in the family of God—O, my brethren, to you I say, seek Him as your Mediator, humble yourself before God that you have slighted the Redeemer, and cared so little for his work. Give up those vile habits of which every man should be heartily ashamed. Take his yoke upon you; give yourself up to his care gladly, and feel that it is the happiest moment of your life, when, without reserve, breaking through every sinful association, every unrighteous habit, every corrupt principle, you give yourself at once and for ever to Him who has died to rescue you. He is waiting to be gracious to you, and if you welcome him will place you amongst his ransomed and perfected saints in the kingdom of his glory.

